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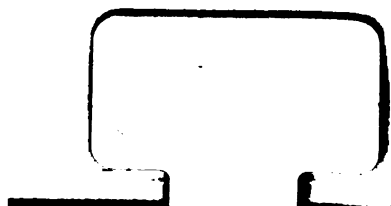
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# Kilgroom

*A STORY OF IRELAND*

NEW YORK  
BELFORD COMPANY, PUBLISHERS  
18-22 EAST 18TH STREET  
[Publishers of *Belford's Magazine*]

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# KILGROOM

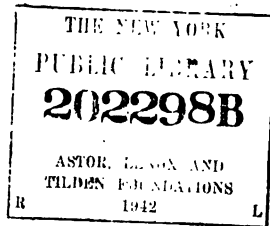
## A STORY OF IRELAND

BY  
JOHN A. STEUART  
AUTHOR OF "A MILLIONAIRE'S DAUGHTER," "SELF  
EXILED," "AN UNDECIDED VICTORY,"  
ETC.

"WOLSEY. We must not stint  
Our necessary actions, in the fear  
To cope malicious censurers.  
KING HENRY. Things done well  
And with a care, exempt themselves from fear.  
Why, we take  
From every tree, lop, bark, and part o' the timber;  
And, though we leave it with a root, thus hack'd,  
The air will drink the sap."  
—SHAKSPERE, *King Henry VIII.*

NEW YORK  
BELFORD COMPANY, PUBLISHERS  
18-22 EAST 18TH STREET

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PRINTING AND BOOK-BINDING CO.,  
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TO THE RIGHT HON.  
WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE, M. P., ETC.,  
THE FRIEND OF HUMANITY, THE FIRST OF LIVING ORATORS,  
THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS OF LIVING STATESMEN,  
THIS STORY OF IRELAND IS DEDICATED,  
WITH EVERY SENTIMENT OF RESPECT AND ESTEEM.

17. 17. 1884



# KILGROOM.

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## CHAPTER I.

THE Sign of The Shamrock, Dunbriggan, is not, architecturally speaking, a pretentious fabric. I fear that only a lover of the low picturesque would find anything to admire in its bulging, weather-stained walls, low eaves and undulating, ragged roof. Assuredly, any one with a cultured appreciation of the ornamental architecture of our modern hotels would be apt to regard it, with a contemptuous eye, as an uncouth, unsightly relic of barbarity. Yet his loftiness might prove his own loss; for you must cross the threshold to discover the peculiar charm of The Shamrock.

Not that even internally it suggests the remotest connection with the fine arts. Its attractions are of another kind—a kind calculated, perhaps, to appeal more potently to the instincts and propensities we inherit from our erring first parent than anything purely artistic. It would be safe to aver that the rarest specimens of any known and practised art would not for a moment vie with its spacious tap-room in those qualities which make readiest way to the heart; for human experience testifies that the loftiest spirituality of genius has less fascination for the average man than rich vinous aromas, pewter mugs, suggestively crooning brass kettles, and a hostess whose gracious warmth he feels to be worth the chilling benignity of some millions of madonnas.

... ..

Though far too modest to vaunt itself in, newspaper advertisements, The Shamrock can furnish a wide variety of drinks; and never in its history has principle been allowed to interfere with practice. Nationalist or Orangeman, Whig or Tory, you can have your favorite beverage. Belfast ginger beer, Burton pale ale and Dublin stout are served to customers with perfect impartiality. The grand characteristic of The Shamrock is that its creeds, political and religious, square exactly with its interests,

Its specialty, however, is whisky punch. It was its whisky punch that spread its fame to every corner of the county; it is its whisky punch that makes it the chief centre of sociality in the town; it is its whisky punch that makes Sunday pedestrianism so popular a pastime in the district; finally, it is on her skill in brewing whisky-punch that Mrs. Muroon particularly prides herself.

Mrs. Muroon was, and still is, a widow. Some five years before the opening of our history, Mr. Muroon, in one of the fits of frolic to which he was liable, shuffled off the mortal coil, leaving a buxom widow of thirty to mourn his untimely translation, and attend to his customers.

The customers, with that ready eye for natural fitness which distinguishes the patrons of a public-house, quickly appreciated the change; and "The Shamrock," from being a rather disorderly house, out at heels, took on an air of prosperity, and became the most popular resort in Dunbriggan, not even excepting Father O'Halloran's chapel on the hill.

On the day on which we are first concerned with it, the Shamrock was uncommonly busy. Everybody seemed to be dying of thirst, as, by some freak of nature, everybody generally is on a holiday; and this was the high festival of Dunbriggan annual fair.

Mrs. Muroon dispensed her good things amid a constant fusillade of jokes and compliments; for bucolic gallantry bursts forth dazzlingly on these grand occasions. It



will lie dormant for the rest of the year if you please, but must needs blaze like a comet on fair day.

The good lady took it all with such consummate tact, such fascinating grace, that more than one imaginative rustic cavalier went home to his couch, thinking her helplessly enamored of his own fair person, and ready, with approved weapons, to defend the choice. It was a delusion that caused many painful heart-beats and some broken heads in the district. For though Mrs. Muroon smiled, no coaxing could induce her to marry again. Perhaps she lacked the necessary philanthropy to undertake the support of a second husband; perhaps her faith in man had been somewhat shaken; for it is a tradition in Dunbriggan that Mr. Muroon had been occasionally in the habit of putting his shillelah to domestic uses rather detrimental to his wife's health; so that a prospect of the renewal of this kind of exercise may not have been agreeable to her. At any rate single she remained, to the utter distraction of all the young men of the neighborhood who aspired to the ownership of a paying public-house. To-day her suitors were about her in force, ready at a moment's notice to break the peace and each other's heads for a single smile. Here and there, however, throughout the crowded taproom were some who, though behaving gallantly towards the lady, were in nowise suitors. Among this minority was a tall, swarthy man of three or four and twenty, named Edward Blake. It is but just to Mrs. Muroon to state that though she bore herself so graciously towards Ned she had no designs upon him, except to secure his patronage. He was a hard bird to catch. She saw his face but rarely, and it was to intimate that she had not the slightest objection in the world to his presence in her house that she, rather invidiously, as some thought, singled him out for her favorite.

She was not aware that he had not come of his own accord, and would not have been there if he had been physically capable of resisting the united force of some half



dozen hospitable friends who had seized upon him and dragged him thither. She only knew that once in and under the social spell of "The Shamrock" he made no serious objection to being entertained,—that is, that he drank his punch like a man ! Perhaps, indeed, he was a trifle too eager to show his paces when once he got started. At any rate he had spent but a short time in the exercise of drinking healths when he began to show symptoms of that singular elation which so often marks your neophyte toper after the second round. He began, of course, by complimenting Mrs. Muroon on her remarkable skill as a brewer, edging in, with the adroitness of an Irishman, a delicate reference to her good looks. Finally he favored the company with a political dissertation.

The deflection into politics naturally gave his talk a tinge of gravity which gradually deepened till his thoughts became too profound for the frivolity of speech and he fell silent. He sat for some time with a very sedate aspect, then somewhat abruptly rose, solemnly shook hands with Mrs. Muroon and nearly everybody else in the room, and with a very erect carriage and a determinedly set face, took his departure. He walked down the crowded street with that measured, deliberate step characteristic of some people during periods of intellectual absorption.

He had gone perhaps two miles when, suddenly finding the problems that revolved in his brain too weighty for him, he sat down by the way-side. Then a singular thing occurred. Whether it was owing to some peculiar condition of the body brought about by his strenuous train of thoughts or to some soporific quality in the evening air, I know not, but he had not sat long when he began to nod, and he had not nodded long when he fell fast asleep. The place being quiet, his repose was not disturbed till about an hour later, when he was discovered by Sandy McTear, the Scotch gardener at Kilgroom Castle, and rather unceremoniously roused.

"What in the name o' goodness hae we here?" exclaimed the Scotchman, shaking the recumbent figure. "Od! this dings a'. Ned Blake lyin' by the road side, like a fiddler frae the fair. My certie, here's a braw sicht! Oh, ye miserable doited deevil, stickin' your failings in the face o' the hale country side! Ye might have had the sense to creep ahint a bush, anyway. Get up wi' ye."

"Troth an' it's a civil tongue ye have in yer head," responded Ned, a trifle thickly, looking up and rubbing his eyes.

"Ned, I widnae believe ye were such a gowk," said Sandy. "I couldnae believe my een. I was clean dumfounded to see ye stickin' yer failings in the face o' the factor or the laird, or wha likes to come this gate, as if you, wi' ne'er a plack in your pooch, were clean abune a' opinion. Get up, and stop your whammlin' there like a stickit soo."

Thus politely admonished, Ned sat up and leisurely surveyed Sandy.

"Bedad! an' it's a complimentary ould gintleman ye are," he said at length. "Sure, an' ye must have been kissin' the blarney stone."

"Come, come, Ned," said Sandy seriously, "this is no the least like you. What's come owre ye, onyway?"

"It's all along av a few toasts at the 'Shamrock,' had cess to it," responded Ned, with a mock air of penitence. "Sure an' a man gets throwed wid drinkin' healths almost the minit he's started."

Sandy eyed him with a look of comic commiseration.

"Weel, and how long are you going to crooch there like a clockin' hen," he demanded at length.

"Faith, just till I'm ready to go, an sorra a minit longer," returned Ned.

While he spoke the clatter of approaching hoofs was heard in the road.

"The factor, the factor," cried Sandy, excitedly: "I ken

the step o' his bay gelding as weel's I ken my ain spade and mattock. Jump up quick and dinna let him see ye there. Are ye sober enough to walk without stacherin', do ye think?" he asked, as Ned got to his feet. "Ay, that's no sae bad; keep on like that. There, now, for goodness' sake, keep steady."

The horseman swept round a curve behind, and in a minute more had overtaken them. He drew rein when he saw who they were.

"Oh, McTear, is that you?" he said. "How are you, Blake? Been at the fair, I suppose."

"Yes, yer honor," answered Ned, pulling his cap over his eyes in his desire to show proper respect to the land agent.

"Well, and how went things at Dunbriggan? But I need scarcely ask a tenant. Of course prices were ruinously low."

"That they were, yer honor," said Ned in what might have seemed a cheery voice for such an admission. "I sould the basties, but divil a price I got at all at all, yer honor. An' there was them in Dunbriggan that was a heap worse than me, who couldn't get a ha'p'orth to save their sowls. Faith it's hard times we're havin', yer honor." And Ned shook his head sagely.

The rider bent a pair of sharp eyes on him, then, turning to Sandy, asked if Col. Croker were at home, and receiving an answer in the affirmative, put spurs to his horse and left them.

"Isn't Misther Wheelan the plisant gentleman?" said Ned. "Faith he spakes to a poor boy be the road side as if me an' him was aquals. It's himself that knows the morthal trouble av' makin' the rint right."

"Very facetious," remarked Sandy grimly. "Very. A real Irish Jamie Macphairson, concernin' which our Poet Laureate has said:

'Sae rantingly, sae wantonly,  
 Sae dauntingly gaed he ;  
 He play'd a spring and danced it round  
 Below the gallows tree.'

But I forgot—you dinna understan' Scotch songs," he added, "ye've never had a Burns. The height o' your achievements in that way is wee bantam Tom Moore.

"Faith an' a foina achavement he is," responded Ned warmly. "Barney O'Reilly, that knowed as much as the College av Doblin could tache him, has said, standin' forinist me, wid his own two lips, that a man be the name av Homer, bad cess to him ! was first an' Thomas Moore next.

"Much good his learnin' has done your Barney O'Rielly, if that's his tale," replied Sandy, with a little snort of contempt. "Them that's no blind or daft or a thegither brainless ken weel there's no in a' Christendom, or heathendom either for that matter o' it, the match o' our Robbie. Where's your friend the factor going, think ye ? " he added.

"Maybe to dine wid the Colonel and talk about them reductions av rint we're to get," replied Ned.

"Or to see wha's death-warrant's to be made out," suggested Sandy grimly. "There'll be some black crosses going, I'm thinkin'. The Colonel's going away for the good o' his health, the honest man ! and Mr. Wheelan is going to consult wi' him to see who deserves hangin' or herryin', and wha's worth squeezin' a thocht mair. You Irish aye mind me o' an orange that's squeezed and suckit and squeezed and suckit as lang's it has a drop o' juice, and then heaved on the midden. And you're aye talking o' what ye'll do. Now, lang syne, when Scotland was something like what Ireland is at the present time, Scotsmen didna gae about the country, brag, brag, braggin' o' what they would do. No; they sat down and counted what share o' the profits o' the country belonged to themselves as the natural owners, and then they quietly sharp-

ened their knives,\* and fegs, they very soon got what they wanted! But you talk, talk, and get up Societies and make a' manner o' p̄parations, but the cap aye snaps, and there you are. D'ye ken that Mr. Wheelan has a wheen photygraphs o' patriots in his pooch the now? I hope yours binna among them."

"Faith, it's long since I knowed Misther Wheelan was clever enough to chate the divil out of the liver wing av a turkey," replied Ned; "but if he has my photygraph its the cleverest trick he ever did, for he must have took me when I was slapin'."

"Weel, weel, I'm just tellin' ye," said Sandy. "And I'm dootin' if some fowk dinna mend their ways they're apt to lose their wind in the loop o' a hempen rope yet."

"Bedad an it's yersilf that can foretell the plisant things, Misther McTear," said Ned. "Father O'Halloran's nothin' at all, at all, beside ye;" and then, unabashed by the prospect, he raised his voice hilariously in eulogy of the charms of one "Kate Kearney," who resides, or resi'd, on the banks of Killarney. Hardly had the manifold excellences of Miss Kearney been celebrated when Sandy stopped.

"I'm thinkin' I'll take the short cut up this lane," he said.

"Nonsense, Misther McTear," said Ned, "a man widout a wife or children or nothin' to be botherin' him needn't be so particular in his hours. Come along the road a bit farther."

Sandy struck a match—for the light had grown dusky, and consulted his watch. "Very peculiar—strange—singular—very!" he ejaculated, as though he had made a startling discovery. "Mistaen the time by a clean hour. I maun be gettin' doited. Yes, I believe I will step on a bit wi ye."

\* Sandy is here perhaps unconsciously plagiarizing Sidney Smith or some other now obscure wit.

And, as if in recognition of this courtesy, Ned again burst into song, ranging over a wide variety of themes from "The darling girls of Ireland" to "A splinter of shillelah O." In one of his merriest choruses a rider came swiftly upon them from the front, called "good-night," and passed on. Ned instantly stopped singing.

"Tim O'Keefe," said Sandy, "I told you there was something in the wind."

"Tim O'Keefe's a mighty fine gentleman," responded Ned with a sudden dryness. "Me an' him's great friends."

"To be sure, and so ye should," said Sandy, with a little chuckle. "Them that gae coortin' the same lass should be friends. Ah, Ned! ye sly dog, thinkin' Sandy was owre blind to notice anything! Which o' ye's going to win, think ye? I hear the lassie's unco bonnie."

Ned made no reply, for they had reached the gate of Arraghlow.

"Come in, Misther McTear," he said, and Sandy, protesting vehemently that "it was high time he was hame," accepted the invitation.

Sandy stiffened in a most remarkable manner as he went up the little gravel walk that led to the door, as though bracing for an ordeal, and immediately on crossing the threshold he bowed elaborately to vacancy and hoped he had the inexpressible pleasure of seeing Mrs. Blake well. Then his eye falling on the figure of a young lady, he drew himself up to a rigid perpendicularity, as though a cautious, half-defiant air were safest with strangers. But the next moment his face was within an inconsiderable distance of his toes as Ned introduced him to Aileen McCarthy.

"So this is her," said Sandy to himself when, after a minute of extreme excitement and little consciousness, he found himself seated on a chair. "So this is her." My, but she's bonnie, real bonnie. It's little wonder there's blood atween Ned and Tim."

But, to tell the truth, he was in no condition to observe nicely. In a simple flash, as it were, he saw folds of gleaming black hair, fine dark eyes, and a tall, lithe figure, and on these scanty grounds had ventured his confident verdict as to her good looks. But as he grew cooler he continued his observations, and found no reason to change the first hasty opinion.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Blake was busy with kettle and teapot. She was not usually an ostentatious woman, but to-night she went about the preparation of the simple meal with the half-avowed purpose of impressing on her prospective daughter-in-law what an efficient housewife could contrive with such limited means as Arraghlow afforded. The young woman might take a hint of what would be expected of her when she became mistress of the household. The hint, however, was conveyed with perfect good-humor.

The meal passed off with many pleasantries. Ned, after his day's outing, was particularly jocose. He bantered Sandy, he bantered Aileen, he bantered his mother, nor did he spare himself where there was the prospect of raising a laugh.

The meal being over, Aileen rose to go.

"They'll be thinking at Ferndyke that I'm lost," she said with a covert glance at Ned.

"Faith will they!" he responded. "An' it's the fine lonely walk you'll be havin' all by yoursilf." He got to his feet as he said this, and took up his cap. The widow smiled, and Sandy coughed with an air of determined pre-occupation. Then, as the lovers still dallied and smiled at each other, he rose to take his leave.

"Oh, Misther McTear," said Ned, "I thought you would stay an' keep my mother from thinking long for an hour or so; for troth I can see I'll have to be goin' up the mountain side."

"Yes—to be sure, nothing could gie me greater pleas-

ure," answered Sandy, somewhat agitated at the prospect of being left alone with the widow; "but ye see when a man's in service he's no' his ain maister. They're very strict at the castle—ridiculously strict, I may say. The fact is I widnae wonder if they're lookin' for me this minute," and, making his adieux with all possible haste, he vanished.

"You have frightened him, mother;" said Ned, "sorra a bit av him's wanted at the castle."

"I hope you won't forget I'm alone then," said his mother, "an' hurry home. And now, Aileen, come down often. Let us see as much of you as you can before you come down entirely." And Aileen blushing promised.

"It's tired I am av this trampin' up this stape hill, Aileen," said Ned when he was alone with Aileen. "I want you to put an end to it by just kapin' yer promise."

The girl leaned a little heavier on his arm, and laughed lightly.

"Oh, I'll come, Ned—I'll come," she said.

"Faith, it's thinkin' I am ye don't want to come at all at all," said Ned, with a feeble pretence of doubt. "Maybe, Tim O'Keefe's gettin' swate agen. I seed him the night ridin' like me lord on a horse. He'd make the lady av ye, Aileen."

"He would," said Aileen, "if he got the chance," she added after a pause.

"An' won't ye give him the chance?"

"It's news you want, Ned," answered the girl, with a little additional pressure on his arm, "and I'm not going to tell you."

The answer might seem unsatisfactory, but Ned was happy.



## CHAPTER II.

YOU will not find Kilgroom Castle described in any Irish guide-book that I know of ; though the omission is not a little singular, considering the number of less venerable and less imposing piles that are honored with dense folios recommending them to the attention of the tourist. Perhaps when it becomes known as the residence of Colonel Croker, of the Magillicuddy Rangers—a crack militia regiment, which only the inveterate jealousy of English officials has hindered from covering itself with glory—Hibernian Baedekers will wake to a sense of remissness and render belated justice to a very ancient and very notable structure. Meantime it may be briefly stated that the castle crowns a commanding eminence overlooking a fair expanse of pasture land, traversed by pellucid streams, and divided into noble parks by well-kept hedges and rows of stately trees. The dense woods crowd close behind, and on either side, giving shelter, and that pleasant sense of seclusion which comes of propinquity to the world, without being witness of its noisomeness and vulgarity ; and the whole is set in a magnificent framework of mountains. Nor are the castle's attractions by any means wholly those of conspicuous aptness of situation. Its history, if we had time to trace it, would be found full of that spirit of romance which seems to breathe from every stone of those fortunate buildings which were used as strongholds in the turbulent, golden days of our fighting forefathers.

The date of its erection is not known, Tradition will

take you back some twelve or fifteen hundred years, and then leave you to grope your way unaided into the mists of a remoter antiquity. All that can be said with certainty is that it is a little less hoary than the hills.

The Croker family is commonly reported to have got possession of the estate for something like a third of its real value. The method was the familiar one of mortgages. The old owners, when deprived of their legitimate occupation of fighting, took to the popular recreation of spending money with rather more zeal than discretion, and, to keep themselves going, were soon obliged to borrow. They, or rather their solicitor, applied to one Ebenezer Croker, who, being a man of large mind and some money, lent them trifles, from time to time, on the security of first mortgages on the Kilgroom estate. There was a tacit understanding that the mortgages were to lie until the return of better times (that happy epoch we are all waiting for) when, of course, they should be paid off. But who can barter with fate? Suddenly one day Ebenezer discovered that he was urgently in need of the money himself, and, it being due and not forthcoming, he was reluctantly obliged to foreclose. The action was generally called mean, but all the same, Mr. Croker took up his residence at the Castle with the rent roll in his pocket, feeling, no doubt, that a man of his kidney could well afford to let people talk.

The manner in which he had made his money did not tend to soften the asperity of criticism. He was accused of having sordidly profited by the misfortunes of his country at a time when Shylock himself might have been touched with pity. But despite all this, Mr. Ebenezer Croker lived prosperously on his estate, and died in the grace of the Church, leaving a son—our Colonel—to enjoy the public opprobrium, and see that rents were kept to high-water mark.

The Colonel inherited all the family acumen, but cast aside the family manners, preferring, as he said himself,

those of the English aristocracy and gentry ; and so successful was he in his emulation that you could not have immediately detected his nationality. It was only when he was angry or excited that the fiery family blood and the latent brogue became too much for him, and the undignified Celt showed himself. Ordinarily he was very placid and precise, self-centered and selfish ; excellently simulating that contempt for things in general which is one of the very best of our British traits. He was cultured too, had literary and political tastes, and spent a great deal of his time in his library. When the thing was feasible, it was in his library he received his visitors ; and when Mr. Wheelan called he was shown thither as a matter of course.

The Colonel was busy with a cigar and the *Saturday Review* when his agent entered, but he courteously laid aside the paper and gave a greeting so warm that the two might have been companions instead of being employer and employed.

"Wheelan," said the Colonel, almost immediately, "if I hadn't promised you to keep out of the way for a little while, and didn't make it a point of honor never to break my word, damme if I'd budge an inch. I'd stay just where I am."

"And get shot," suggested Mr. Wheelan, with a smile.

"And get shot," repeated the Colonel, firmly. "And why not, if duty calls ? Am not I a soldier ? Do I not carry the Queen's commission in my pocket ? Suppose a rebellion should break out, and I not here to take command of the Rangers. Great heavens ! the result might be terrible—dismemberment of the Empire, the Queen's person in danger, and Lord knows what besides."

"To my mind there's not the slightest ground for apprehending a rebellion at present," returned Wheelan. Besides, if there were to be an outbreak, it isn't at all likely the Rangers would be called out."

"And why not?" said the Colonel a little sharply.  
"What are they for, pray?"

"You haven't read the latest," said Wheelan, producing an evening paper.

"Possibly not," replied the Colonel, the smallest suspicion of testiness in his tone. "But what's the latest?"

"Sir Jenkins Jorum is coming over to be ready for emergencies," said Wheelan, handing the paper to his patron.

The Colonel laid his cigar on the edge of his writing table and read the paragraph. "Ah," he said, with rather more feeling than he meant to show, "and this is the game is it? Well, be it so. Wheelan, if that's how our sacrifices are to be appreciated, why, the State had better look to itself, that is all. You know what I have done with those Rangers," he went on in an aggrieved tone. "I found them a lot of ragged losels, without discipline or decency; why, damme, a company of highwaymen would have been infinitely more respectable. Look at them to-day! And at sessions and elsewhere, haven't I been killing myself to serve my country, and forsooth this Sir Jorum—an ominous name by the by—must step into the paved way and take precedence of us all. An English pet! What's his record, Wheelan?"

"Really, sir, I haven't followed his career closely," answered Wheelan, "but I have been led to understand the gentleman has been in action."

"Umph, in action!" said the Colonel, with just a touch of professional heat. "Where?"

"In New Zealand or Africa—among the blacks some where."

"Absurd, ridiculous," said the Colonel rising in his energy and pacing the floor. But remembering the next instant that this conduct was much more Celtic than Saxon, he sat down. "Well," he said, with that calm which is more terrible than the wildest tempest of pas-

sion. "The Government, no doubt, think they know our business and our requirements better than we do ourselves. But, to turn to matters that concern us more closely—have you got that list?"

Mr. Wheelan's hand sought the depths of a capacious pocket and brought forth a bulky official-looking envelope, from which he abstracted a sheet of foolscap paper. "Here it is," he said, "with thirteen of them on it."

"Thirteen," said the Colonel, taking a long pull at his cigar and emitting the smoke in a series of rings. "Thirteen. Are you superstitious, Wheelan?"

Wheelan laughed lightly. "Superstitious, sir?" he said. "Well, unless a faint belief in the devil can be called superstitious, I don't think I am."

"Yes," returned the Colonel, languidly, as if the matter did not at all concern him. "I am afraid the devil is a sad reality, Wheelan. But, talking of thirteen, some people hold that it's an unlucky number. I daresay, if my father were alive now and saw this paper, he would be talking fantastic things about ill omens."

"An example his son is not at all likely to follow," said Wheelan, insinuatingly.

"Well, on the whole, I hope not, Wheelan," answered the Colonel, leisurely. "I have never, to say the truth, been able to discover aught unlucky, or occult, or mysterious about the number. What about these thirteen interesting persons?"

"Eight are a gale behind, and five are making improvements," answered Wheelan, consulting the sheet.

"Well, Wheelan, you know—" The sentence was impressively finished with a look and a shake of the head.

"I know," said Wheelan, "and have always acted—"

"True, true," said the Colonel, with some animation, interrupting the agent; "and I didn't for a moment mean to imply the contrary. I have always found you ready to

do your duty, Wheelan, and I mean no flattery by saying so to your face."

"You honor me, Colonel," responded Wheelan, with a reverential bow. "I hope I have done my duty."

"I am sure of it, Wheelan," said the Colonel, "perfectly sure of it. And now about these thirteen?"

"Three out of the five can bear ten pounds apiece nicely," said Wheelan. "The other two—let me see. There's this lazy scoundrel Malone, who doesn't half till his land; another thirty shillings would make him wake up and do him all the good in the world. And there's the Widow Blake. You remember we raised her £5 the gale before last, and £2 last gale. She's been clamoring about a reduction, at the instigation, I believe, of that pious priest, Father O'Halloran."

"A rank traitor, a clerical ruffian," interpolated the Colonel, pleasantly.

"But I have been watching her," continued Mr. Wheelan, "and on the heels of asking a reduction she comes out in a brand new shawl; and, not only that, I understand the house has been papered from floor to ceiling."

"Papered!" said the Colonel, in righteous indignation at this luxurious extravagance. "Papered, indeed! I wonder what next? They'll have Brussels carpet on the floor and lace curtains on the windows, and roast beef and old port for dinner, by and by. The thing's absurd! How much can she stand?"

"Well, taking into account what I have told you, and the further fact that her son can afford to go to the fair and drink till he's tipsy, I think £5 would be letting her off very easy. It might be the means of making her son eschew strong drink."

"On with it, by all means," said the Colonel, promptly. "Those who can afford finery and such luxuries as you have mentioned can well afford to pay more rent."

"And the eight must pay or go?" said Wheelan.

"Certainly," said the Colonel. "This is the only country in the world in which a landlord has to fight for his own. Out with them—every mother's son of them—just as soon as you can !"

These satisfactory and humane arrangements made the Colonel ring for hot water and sugar ; and, having mixed the social glass, took up his favorite paper and began to read aloud some extracts from what he designated—no doubt appropriately enough—its "scorchers."

## CHAPTER III.

MR. PERCY WHEELAN was a man who had played many parts in the drama of life, and always with distinguished success. Versatile and adaptive, he thrived in all atmospheres, under all conditions. His prosperity was attributable in part to genuine talent ; in part to a timely and well-considered servility, and in part to an arrogant and high-handed brutality.

Mr. Wheelan was punctilious on the score of duty. It was his boast that from the moment he entered the Gombeen man's office in Tralee, to master the various meanings of the word "discount," the elastic principles of compound interest, and the nice art of financial thumbscrewing, right through his career as Jew's assistant, attorney's clerk or attorney, to his present elevation, he had never shirked his duty ; he had never been lenient where he should have been severe, never generous where he should have been exacting—a fact, indeed, amply attested by the ruins that blackened his track. But he was ever careful to avoid all appearance of wantonness. In all his acts he could appeal to one or other of two great principles—the principles of justice and duty.

For the rest, Mr. Wheelan was a good enough sort of man : social and affable under the proper conditions, much attached to his fellows when his legs were under the mahogany, and cherishing no evil design nor hardening his heart save where it served his interest. In person he was



tall and rotund ; in complexion, ruddy, with an eye of a neutral tint and expression, a cautious eye, an eye that never divulged secrets or opened a window into the soul, an eye from which you could decipher no trait of character a perfectly baffling eye. In years he was five-and-forty and his constitution was untouched.

On the morning following the interview recorded in the last chapter, he repaired to Kilgroom Castle to expedite the departure of Colonel Croker and his family. After much planning and unnecessary delay, this day had been fixed on for leaving, and he was anxious to do what in him lay to get them promptly off. His shrewd eye had detected signs of a coming storm, and, self-centred and self-reliant, he wanted no clogs to his will. Some time before the tenants on the estate had dared to memorialize the Colonel for a reduction of rent, and, though it had been peremptorily refused, the wholesome act failed of the anticipated effect. The Colonel, indeed, was easily led to believe the matter was ended, but Wheelan knew the insolent tenants were only waiting for gale-day to renew their preposterous demand. He had no fear of the Colonel, but Mrs. Croker and Miss Croker were both inclined to leniency, and it was safest to have them at a distance. There was another motive, too, for getting the whole family off for an indefinite period—a motive never breathed to living soul, but a potent one, nevertheless.

If the impression could be conveyed to official circles that Colonel Croker had crossed St. George's channel for a permanency, then Mr. Wheelan, like the agents of other absentee landlords, might be able to write the magic letters J. P. after his name. All these considerations weighed with him in urging his patron and family to sojourn for a time in England.

He found the Castle topsy-turvy ; the halls full of boxes and trunks, the furniture in disarray, and everybody excitedly running hither and thither, making as much noise

and doing as little service as possible. Mr. Wheelan took in hand the hammering and roping, and soon had the troublesome baggage on carts at the door. Then, when these were off to the station, the family sat down to an impromptu luncheon, Mr. Wheelan of course joining them.

The rebellious state of the country, the impudent audacity of the peasantry, the inexpressible wickedness of priests and political agitators formed the staple of conversation, and very fluently Mr. Wheelan talked, and very caustic were his remarks.

"The re-institution of the whipping post would be a highly commendable thing," he said. "Nothing brings the obstinate to their senses quicker than a touch of the lash."

"I trust you will not be too hard on the tenants, Mr. Wheelan," interpolated Mrs. Croker.

Mrs. Croker had not the nerve of her husband, and would sometimes rather forego her rights than fight for them. Her tone had a plaintive strain in it, as though she were conscious of being hopelessly alone in her sympathies.

"So far as I am concerned I will strive to do my duty," said Wheelan with a deferential bow. "My sole object in life, if I may say so without appearing egotistical, is to do my duty. I dare say if I were to consult my feelings I should be as charitable as an angel. But the world cannot be carried forward by mere sentimentality."

"At any rate, I trust there will be no evictions," said Mrs. Croker, following the subject with quite unusual pertinacity.

Mr. Wheelan coughed slightly.

"The gallant colonel has been leaking," he commented internally. "Why as to that," he said aloud. "I am sure the colonel is as much averse to evicting his tenants as anybody. But what are you to do with those who will give you neither rent nor land? You know, Mrs. Croker," and he spoke in accents of pain, "some people are so

far gone in infatuation that sharp remedies are necessary to bring them back to their senses."

Mrs. Croker was silenced. But Miss Croker threw herself into the breach. "What about my old playmate, Ned Blake?" she asked. "I hope you will not turn him out at least. You know"—and she smiled so sweetly that Mr. Wheelan would have given worlds to be able to promise what she wanted—"You know he and I used to be great friends when he gathered flowers and birds' eggs for me. He was quite a little Don Quixote in his way; and his mother, too, used to feed me on fadge and tell me fairy stories and ghost stories till I'd be afraid to move."

"Something to be grateful for, to be sure," laughed her father.

"I am sorry to say, Miss Croker," said Mr. Wheelan gravely, "that the young man is turning out very badly. Only yesterday I saw him coming home from the fair quite tipsy."

"Ned Blake tipsy!" said Miss Croker in surprise. "I never heard of his being tipsy before, and he has lived, so to speak, under my own eye since I can remember. He always seemed to me a slave who never took a minute's rest."

"Young ladies are so generous, Miss Croker," said Wheelan urbanely. "Blake is like many another young man in this country, he has the knack of making a great show when you or any one like you is looking on. I believe he is an accomplished actor."

Miss Croker was on the point of making some warm retort, for she held a good opinion of Ned Blake and only an indifferent opinion of Mr. Wheelan, but her father interrupted her.

"I am afraid we must postpone the discussion to another time, my dear," he said. "It's time for us to be getting ready," and they all rose.

Mrs. Croker had a busy and anxious half-hour instruct-

ing Mr. Wheelan, for the twentieth time, how to manage the house in her absence ; for, until other arrangements should be made, he was to take up his quarters in the Castle. Then he mounted his horse and rode to the station, leaving the others to follow in the carriage.

"You'll have prompt remittances, I think, Colonel," he said, as he was bidding them good-bye on the platform. The Colonel pressed his hand and hoped so ; the whistle blew and the train was off. Mr. Wheelan raised his hat with a very bland smile on his face, then turned to go his way. "There are a few things I'd like to happen before setting eyes on you again," he thought.

He tossed a two-shilling piece to the boy who held his horse. He was generous ; his dreams gave promise of speedily becoming solid realities.

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## CHAPTER IV.

HARDLY had Mr. Wheelan got his bachelor belongings properly arranged in Kilgroom Castle, when he was waited upon by a deputation from the tenants of the estate requesting a reduction of rent on the old plea of bad crops and low prices. He received the delegates with lofty civility, returned a brief and emphatic answer, and pitched their petition into the fire, without reading it, while they stood haranguing. The men felt somewhat aggrieved, for the document represented much anxious thought and strenuous literary effort and retired in a rather sullen mood.

"Ye moight have read it anyway, sor," said one man ;  
"it would have tould you the state we're in."

"I have read so many of them that I know every phrase by heart," returned Mr. Wheelan, "and I prefer now with your permission, to vary my reading. Good-morning." And then he sat down to elaborate and complete his plans.

Forewarned and forearmed, he was not sorry in his soul to have an opportunity of striking a swift and effectual blow.

"I'll trample out their cursed rebellion," he said to himself. "One good lesson they'll remember, and the thing's ended."

Accordingly when gale day came he went to his office, firmly resolved not to yield an inch ; and the better to support his resolution he was accompanied by a strong body of police, in addition to his two clerks and Tim O'Keefe the bailiff. Mr. Wheelan had no high opinion of the cour-

age of his countrymen, and argued, plausibly enough, that the truculent gleam of steel would prove as potent a logic as any he could use.

Nor did he prophesy amiss, for scarcely had he got his papers arranged when Ned Blake entered, as meek of aspect as the heart of agent could desire.

"Ah," thought Mr. Wheelan complacently, "didn't I say so? Here they are already. Well, Blake," he called out in his cheeriest tones, "you have lost no time in coming to pay your rent. I am glad to see you set so good an example. Let me see," consulting a book "seventeen, thirteen, six—seventeen pounds, thirteen shillings and sixpence—a mere trifle to a man like you. Shall I sign the receipt?"

Ned affected to smile though his hand trembled and he moved and twitched uneasily on his feet.

"Yer honor," he said in an uncertain voice. Mr. Wheelan looked at him with an expression of great amazement.

"Yer honor, times are hard," said Ned, still with that smile which would have been comic had it not been so pathetic, "and—and prices are low——"

"Blake, what does all this mean?" demanded Mr. Wheelan severely.

"Troth, yer honor, an' it's the nasty meanin' it has entoirely. I have tried an' tried, yer honor, an' can't make a ha'p'orth."

Mr. Wheelan shook his head impatiently.

"I want no long stories," he said. "Are you, or are you not, going to pay your rent?"

"Would yer honor just listen a minit," asked Ned, leaning in a pleading manner across the counter.

"I'll listen to no stories about hard times and low prices, I tell you," answered Mr. Wheelan curtly. "I know all you would say."

"But, yer honor, times were never as hard as they are now,"

Mr. Wheelan waved his hand angrily.

"Have I not just done telling you that I don't want to hear all that stuff about hard times?" he demanded.

"Are you going to pay your rent, or are you not?"

"If yer honor would only listen to me a minit."

"Damn the fellow's impudence," muttered Mr. Wheelan.

"ARE—YOU—GOING—TO—PAY—YOUR—RENT—OR—ARE—YOU—NOT?" he asked again, emphasizing each word singly.

Ned drew himself up suddenly, changed from one foot to the other, then leaned over the counter again.

"I wanted just to spake a word to yer honor," he said, his anxiety painted in his face.

Mr. Wheelan stared at him for the space of half a minute or so, and then, evidently much surprised that Ned did not shrivel up and disappear, inquired whether he understood the English language.

Ned, anxious, as people in his circumstances usually are, to put the best possible construction on all that is said by their superiors, affected to be much amused.

"Yer honor will have a joke," he said. "Nothin' damps yer honor's spirits."

Mr. Wheelan laid down his pen and minutely studied Ned's face.

"Well, upon my soul, that's better than I could have believed," he said slowly. "A joke indeed! You seem to have very considerable powers of imagination, my man. We will see whether it is a joke or not. I daresay it would prove a very comfortable joke for you if Colonel Croker were to remit a gale's rent; but unfortunately he has no such intention. So if you intend to pay your rent you had better do it without any wrangling; and if not—" Mr. Wheelan shut his mouth with a snap, as if to indicate the sharp treatment that might be expected should the money be withheld another minute.

There was still a ghastly image of a smile on Ned's face;

for in the sudden terror of this speech the extension of the mouth had remained fixed. He was staring at the agent in deadly fascination, paralyzed in every faculty, and as perfect a picture of helplessness as one could well imagine.

"You needn't stare," said Mr. Wheelan, as though to assure him again the matter was no joke. "Every ha'penny of rent must be paid, or—you see those fellows outside," he broke off, giving the sentence a happy and emphatic turn.

"Don't be thinkin' I don't want to pay yer honor," said Ned huskily, partially recovering his voice. He cleared his throat with a desperate effort. "For God's sake, yer honor, don't be thinkin' that. I have brought you here every penny I have in the world," and he began to ladle loose silver from his pocket to the counter.—"Every ha'penny, yer honor," he went on, "all I meant to say to yer honor was that I couldn't get it all up, an' maybe yer honor would give me time—that's all, yer honor."

The perspiration stood clammily on his brow and the strong sinewy hands were shaking violently.

"How much have you got," asked Mr. Wheelan, soothed a little by the sight of money.

Ned began to count the silver, but trembled so much that one of the clerks had to take the work off his hands.

"Eight pounds, ten and ninepence," said the clerk, when he had finished counting.

"It's every ha'p'orth I could get, yer honor," said Ned eagerly.

"And it won't do," answered Mr. Wheelan. "Every cent of rent must be paid. Colonel Croker has so instructed me, and I must do as I am told."

"If yer honor would let it lie till next gale day," suggested Ned fearfully.

"I can make no promises. And I should make none in your case, under any circumstances. A man who can go



to the fair, and come home reeling drunk, should be able to pay his rent."

Darkness fell upon Ned as if he had been struck a sudden blow. His brain reeled; he was not sure that he had heard aright. He stood for a minute holding on to the counter.

"Is it lavin' the bit place, yer honor manes?" he asked then in a quivering voice. "If the rint's not paid, is that what it'll mane?"

"That's as succinct a way of putting as any," answered Mr. Wheelan.

"And yer honor won't take this till next gale day?" asked Ned.

"No."

"Take it yer honor," pleaded Ned, "take it, an' I'll try what I can do."

"I'll give you a receipt on account, if you like," said Wheelan, "on the distinct understanding that it is in no way to prejudice any action that may be thought necessary."

Ned pushed over the money. "Take it, yer honor," he repeated, "take it. An' how long will ye give me for the rest, yer honor?" he asked after a pause.

"You are one of the persons who cannot understand even plain speech," answered Mr. Wheelan, "I will not promise you an hour."

Ned said no more, but turned with an uncertain step and took his way.

He had not gone more than a quarter of a mile, when, in turning a curve, he came face to face with the other tenants on the estate, marching to the rent-office in a body.

"Come along, Ned," they shouted. "We're going to get a reduction. Come along. Hooray for the Plan of Campaign! Come along." And Ned, protesting, and indeed struggling, was laid hold on and pushed into the ranks.

Meanwhile the vigilant Tim O'Keefe, looking in the direction in which Ned had disappeared, saw a cloud of dust, and a moment later a body of men swinging round the curve.

"Be the powers, here they are in a body!" he exclaimed excitedly.

Mr. Wheelan rose from his chair and looked through the window at the approaching mass, and instantly taking in the situation, raised the window and spoke to Sub-Inspector Buckingham. Then he sat down quietly at his desk with a brace of pistols before him.

As the tenants came near, the Sub-Inspector drew out his men with their rifles at "the ready."

"Stand!" he called in a loud voice to the advancing tenants, "and explain yourselves."

But the solid mass, disregarding his command, came steadily and firmly on.

"Stand!" he shouted again, "or you advance at your peril."

"Halt!" came in stentorian tones from the ranks of the tenants, and Father O'Halloran stepped to the front.

He was a tall man, of a fine presence, and perhaps fifty years of age.

"Put up your guns, Mr. Buckingham," he said. "We have no intention of engaging you in deadly combat. We are come as civil men on a civil business. Draw your men aside and let the tenants pass."

"I will know what all this means first," replied the Sub-Inspector haughtily. "Your aspect is anything but civil."

"What it means is hardly within your province to inquire, Mr. Buckingham," said the priest. "I assure you that we do not in any way mean violence; our errand is peaceful, and that ought to satisfy you."

"But it does not satisfy me," retorted the Sub-Inspector sharply. He was one of the class of officials not at all scarce in Ireland, who make a great deal of a trifling

authority. "And you shall not go a step farther until you have answered my question," he added.

"That remains to be seen, Mr. Buckingham," answered the priest calmly. "You can understand that we have little desire to thrust ourselves on the points of your bayonets or make targets for the balls your rifles hold, but we are come here for a perfectly lawful purpose, and are not to be daunted or diverted even by a body of constabulary. Be good enough, therefore, to let us pass on."

"Your insolence shall not help you," said the Sub-Inspector, growing scarlet in the face.

At this a groan of rage rose from the solid ranks of the tenants, but, with unruffled dignity, Father O'Halloran begged them to restrain all passion.

"You, Mr. Buckingham," he said, turning back to the Sub-Inspector, "have undertaken on your own responsibility, and without adequate cause, to stop men who are going quietly and legally about their business. I bid you beware, and once more request that you will let us pass."

"Not a step," roared the Sub-Inspector, "not a step till you answer my question."

"Then the result lie with you," said the priest, and he was just on the point of telling the men to wheel about and march away, when Mr. Wheelan came to the door.

"What is it, Father O'Halloran?" he called, "do these men wish to speak to me?"

"They do, Mr. Wheelan," answered Father O'Halloran.

"Then you had better let them pass on, Buckingham," said Mr. Wheelan to the Sub-Inspector, and sullenly that officer ordered his men to fall back.

"You quite appal me, Father O'Halloran," said Mr. Wheelan, jauntily, as the close-packed mass came up. "If it weren't for your own presence, this would look for all the world like the raid of a Rapparee." He smiled like one who knows that nothing can be lost by putting his audience in good-humor.

"Our purpose is more pacific, Mr. Wheelan," returned Father O'Halloran, without the faintest response to the affected lightness of the agent.

"Then we'd better get inside," said Mr. Wheelan urbanely, "or at any rate, as many of us as can get at once. It's easier transacting business at one's desk," and he turned with an air of implicit confidence to go in.

"One moment, if you please, Mr. Wheelan," said the priest, calling him back. "These men would like to say a word to you when they are all together."

"Well," said Mr. Wheelan, facing about with a swift change of expression.

"The present is a very trying epoch for the Irish peasantry," said the priest, "and the tenants on the Kilgroom estate are suffering perhaps as acutely as any others."

"Indeed," said Mr. Wheelan coldly.

"You know it perfectly, Mr. Wheelan," said Father O'Halloran.

"I know nothing of the sort, Father O'Halloran," answered Wheelan quickly. "What I know is that Colonel Croker has always treated his tenants most fairly and honorably, and if they are beginning to shuffle for concessions, it will save time and talk, and perhaps trouble as well, if I tell you and them at once, that no request for a reduction of rent will be entertained for a moment. If they attended to their work instead of spending their time in scheming evil, they might come here liker honest men."

"Mr. Wheelan, you speak in haste, like David the son of Jesse," returned the priest. "There is not a man before you who has ever been guilty of planning evil—at least so far as his landlord is concerned."

"You force me to be uncivil, Father O'Halloran," said Mr. Wheelan. "That statement is false, and I daresay you know it."

There was a pause. Father O'Halloran looked from Wheelan to the square of set faces behind. An ominous

glow suffused them and every brow was contracted. A murmur like the growling of the angry sea rose on the still air, swelled dangerously for a second, then sank and died away. Only the priest's admonishing look kept the men from breaking the peace.

"This is the second time within the space of a few minutes that I have been insulted wantonly," said Father O'Halloran, again addressing Wheelan. "But I can afford to let personal affronts pass when so many weightier things are concerned. Am I to understand that you refuse to listen to what the tenants have to say?"

"You have had my answer," said Mr. Wheelan.

"Mr. Wheelan," said the priest solemnly, "you hold men's lives in your hand. Do not make the people desperate. Believe me, their burdens are more than they can bear."

"Pretty fair rhetoric, Father O'Halloran," responded Mr. Wheelan, jibingly, "but the logic is not convincing. Our first duty in this world is to render justice."

"Justice tempered with mercy," said the priest.

"I'm no Jesuit, Father O'Halloran, and will not undertake to argue with you," returned Wheelan, "but I know the Colonel's mind and my own, and there will be no reduction of rent—no, not so much as a single farthing."

Father O'Halloran stood silent for a little, very visibly pained, his eyes bent on the ground, as though he were considering what to do next.

"Down on your knees, boys," he cried suddenly, turning to the tenants; "we will ask him on our knees," and down on their knees pastor and people went. There was something inexpressibly thrilling in the sight of that stern, haggard body of men thus presenting their petition. Even Wheelan felt his pulses tingling with strange sensations, as he looked upon the strained intent faces and the bodies bent in supplication.

Father O'Halloran, in the name of the tenants, formally

made the request for reduction of rent, which was, of course, peremptorily refused.

Father O'Halloran rose slowly to his feet, the men following his example.

"Men of Kilgroom," he said, addressing them in a voice quivering with emotion. "You have this day bent the knee to man as to Almighty God, and he has spurned your petition. Men cannot do more than you have done, and I will not ask you to debase yourselves further."

A threatening murmur arose. There were whispered suggestions and muttered curses and a darkening of countenances. Father O'Halloran watched the men closely. He knew what was in their hearts.

"No violence, boys," he said. "Think of the folks at home."

"It's of them we're thinkin', your riverence," answered one. "Starvin', some of them, an' to be took like this."

"Get back to them quietly, then," said the priest, and with one accord the men wheeled and marched off.

The blood went from Wheelan's face and lips as he saw them move swiftly away. "Very pretty," he said, "but the end's not come yet."

## CHAPTER V.

MR. WHEELAN retired to his desk with somewhat complicated and peculiar feelings. The first blow had been struck, and if there were any advantage it certainly did not lie with him. "But he strikes best who strikes last," said Mr. Wheelan to himself, grimly. "Lucas," he said abruptly to one of the clerks, "make out a list of their names and addresses. I'll have every mother's son of them evicted. If they die in a ditch, they will have themselves to blame. There shall be no dallying, no temporizing, no half-measures while I am here. And it's a pity that traitorous priest cannot be served like the rest of them. But wait !"

Thoughts, schemes, plans of revenge, were flashing through his brain—almost too swift and too numerous to be caught.

"Lucas, would you not think those men were led by Father O'Halloran ?" he asked quickly.

"Yes, sir," answered Lucas, "I would think so."

"You're perfectly satisfied of that, Lucas ?"

"Yes, sir."

"You'd swear to it ?"

He was gazing into Lucas's face with a fierce intentness that made that gentle young man fairly tremble.

"As far as my eyes could see, sir," answered Lucas.

"Mind what you say, sir," said Wheelan in a voice that almost made the pen drop from Lucas's fingers. "If the question ever came up in a court of law, would you swear

that that confounded priest incited the tenants not to pay their rents ? ”

“ Incited, sir ? ” said Lucas.

“ Yes, sir, incited,” repeated Wheelan with a rising inflection. “ It’s a plain word—do you grasp its meaning ? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ Well, now that you have grasped its meaning, did you or did you not hear Father O’Halloran inciting them not to pay their rents ; in other words, was it at his instigation they came here and made their infamous demand for a reduction ? Was it not he who told them to march away without paying a penny ? ”

“ I think so, sir,” faltered Lucas.

“ You think so ! By heaven, you had better stop thinking and be sure of it.”

“ Yes, sir, he did.”

“ Lucas, you hesitate and equivocate and evade, as though I were coercing you. You may write a check for your month’s salary and I’ll sign it.”

“ I did not mean to hesitate or equivocate, or evade, sir,” said Lucas—this time with admirable promptness and spontaneity, for he had been touched in a vulnerable spot. —“ I am quite sure he incited them.”

“ Be careful what you say, sir,” returned Wheelan. “ Are you aware that your words would render the parish priest liable to criminal prosecution ? ”

“ I am quite positive, sir,” answered Lucas, almost as vehemently as if he were trying to force a disagreeable conviction on his master—“ I am quite sure of it.”

“ That Father O’Halloran incited Colonel Croker’s tenants not to pay their rents ? Mind what you are about.”

“ I do mind, sir.”

“ And you are prepared to swear it ? ”

“ Swear, sir ? ”

“ Yes, certainly. Why, damme, have the people of this place forgotten the English language ! ”



"Oh, to be sure I'd swear, sir."

"Moore," said Wheelan turning to the other clerk, "you hear what Lucas says after my caution—and you too, O'Keefe?"

"I do, sir," responded Moore, with great alacrity.

"I do, sir," came as promptly from Mr. O'Keefe.

"An' bedad, yer honor, its mesilf could swear the same thing agin his riverence, though he's me own praste," added Tim.

"I warn you, one and all, to be careful what you are about," said Wheelan, looking round upon them admonishingly. "Are you aware how serious a thing it is to swear away a man's liberty?"

But the assurance of a full knowledge of the seriousness of the thing came so promptly and unanimously that Mr. Wheelan could not but feel satisfied.

"Very well, then," he said, "go on with your list, Lucas."

And then it occurred to him that the Colonel would naturally expect to be informed of the state of affairs. Mr. Wheelan had scant relish for the task; for the writing of a letter, no matter how adroitly phrased, involved the confession of a present defeat, without the possibility of satisfactorily imparting his own feeling of certainty regarding the ultimate result.

The Colonel might get alarmed and come posting back; and then farewell to all the dreams of greatness which Mr. Wheelan had been so fondly cherishing. The magisterial bench lifted itself afar off to remote altitudes, the magic letters, like Prospero's actor-spirits, melted into air—into thin air.

No, he would not write just yet. There was luck in leisure. Matters might take a more favorable turn. At any rate he would be able to see his way more clearly, and put a better face on things to-morrow or next day, or some time soon; and so he pushed away the sheet of paper

on which he had intended to write, and rose a trifle out of humor.

He looked about the office for a moment sternly, and his eye fell on Lucas, who was nervously scratching away on his sheet of foolscap.

"Now, then, look sharp," said Mr. Wheelan. "Have you not got that list finished yet?"

"Ye-es, sir," answered Lucas, bending his head till his nose almost rested on the paper, and feeling notwithstanding all his efforts that he had never written so slowly in his life. "Ye-es, sir."

Mr. Wheelan had always disliked Edmund Lucas—not because of anything objectionable in the young man himself, but because he was a *protégé* of Father O'Halloran. He had been attached to the office prior to the advent of Mr. Wheelan at Kilgroom, and somehow or other the agent had never been able to fabricate an excuse, plausible enough even for his own liberal conscience, for getting rid of him. He had badgered him mercilessly, but the young man took it all without a murmur, for the emoluments of the office, though far from being splendid, were important to him; and thus his very meekness had foiled his tormentor.

Lucas made desperate attempts to write swiftly, but his fingers were clammy and full of cramp and, do what he would, the pen moved sluggishly. Moreover, he was so confused and excited that he misspelled words, and inserted wrong addresses, till what, between scorings and interlinations, his paper looked as if a batch of spiders, well inked, had danced a quadrille on it.

"This is altogether abominable," he said, looking over Lucas's shoulder. "Perfectly abominable. I don't know what you can be thinking about. Here, Moore, take and rewrite this, for it seems it is beyond this idiot."

"I'll write it again sir, if you only wait a minute," said Lucas with a pitiful look of appeal. "Your impatience put me out, sir."

"My impatience!" said Wheelan, aghast with amazement. "What's the world coming to? I, impatient!" and as if to demonstrate his leniency and forbearance to all who had eyes he snatched the paper from Lucas and gave it to Moore. Lucas stared after the paper for a second with an expression of anguish, then rose, and took his hat as if to go out.

"Sit down," thundered Mr. Wheelan.

Lucas meekly replaced his hat on the peg and sat down.

"Get your note book," said Wheelan, and taking up a letter he began to dictate a reply.

Lucas scratched away desperately, but what, with his mental commotion and his physical tremor, no one would have suspected the characters he traced to have been modelled on those of Mr. Pitman. Mr. Wheelan continued his dictation until he had answered perhaps half a dozen letters.

"Write those out fairly and be quick about it," he said, when he had finished.

Lucas turned back the leaves of his note-book apprehensively, and found an undecipherable chaos of hieroglyphics and a blank memory. Mr. Wheelan watched him fumbling over his notes.

"Come, make haste," he said. "I am waiting to sign those letters."

Lucas filled in the date on the top of a sheet; then he managed to make out an addressee's name, but a syllable farther he could not proceed if his salvation depended on his getting on. Then, finding himself at a standstill, he crumpled up the sheet of paper and threw it away.

"You must be extravagant as well as stupid," commented Mr. Wheelan, who was still closely watching the unhappy clerk.

Without a word, Lucas took another sheet and began again; but to dissemble were only to prolong the agony, and he looked up.

"I find my notes rather confused at the start, sir," he said, in the meekest tones a human voice could assume.

Mr. Wheelan looked at him witheringly.

"You are a brainless ass," he said, deliberately. "I am sure I cannot make out how that Jesuitical priest ever managed to foist you on this office."

The young man's face deepened in color, and big tears stole into his eyes. Still he made no answer, but sat patiently till his tormentor should have finished.

Mr. Wheelan continued gazing at him. "I am just beginning to see one reason for Father O'Halloran's exceeding kindness—a kindness that had somewhat puzzled me before. There is—yes, there is—something of a family resemblance."

The man's sinister meaning flashed upon Lucas. He looked up suddenly, his face set, his eyes ablaze. The cowed look was gone; his expression was one of angry defiance.

"Do you mean to insinuate—?" He would have said more, but his anger choked him.

Wheelan laughed a light, sneering laugh. "I shouldn't wonder," he said.

With the celerity of thought Lucas was on his feet, and, ere the smile had quite faded from his face, Wheelan was heels over head on the floor, with his chair uppermost.

"Murder!" he shouted, scrambling to his feet. "Catch him! Send for the police! I'll have him transported! Oh, the villainous assassin!"

O'Keefe and Moore rushed at Lucas, but fell back, cowering, as he snatched up a pistol from Wheelan's table and covered them.

"The first man who tries to lay a finger on me shall have a bullet in his brain, and I don't care who he is," he said.

At this Wheelan himself advanced, as if to grapple with his antagonist.

"Stand back!" said Lucas, "or as sure's the sky's above us, I'll kill you!" and something in his face constrained Wheelan to obey. "You are a mean, despicable hound," Lucas went on, addressing Mr. Wheelan—"a tyrant and a coward!" And throwing the pistol in the fireplace with a force that smashed it, he turned on his heel and strode away.

The three men looked at each other sheepishly for a moment.

"I'll have him transported!" cried Wheelan, recovering himself. "I'll have him made a felon for life!"

If anything had been wanted to whet Mr. Wheelan's appetite for battle, the encounter with Lucas did it, and before the day was done a lawyer's clerk was busily filling up the necessary notices for the tenants.

## CHAPTER VI.

TIDINGS of what had happened at the Kilgroom rent-office did not reach Ferndyke until late in the evening, when Mr. Timothy O'Keefe charged himself with the duty of carrying the intelligence thither in person. About half-way up he came to a small open space which commanded a fine view of the country beneath, and here he paused to take breath. While he stood, the mellifluous sound of a female voice, raised in song, reached his ear from above. At first he could not distinguish the words, but the strains swelling, or the breeze favoring him, he listened to this distinct and transporting invitation :

“ So come in the evening, or come in the morning,  
Come when you're looked for, or come without warning,  
Kisses and welcome you'll find here before you,  
And the oftener you come, the more I'll adore you ! ”

The singing stopped abruptly, as though the singer had been interrupted ; and Mr. O'Keefe gave ear with a dancing heart.

“ Faix, Cushla-ma-chree, I wisht I knowed it was for me you were afther singin' ,” he said to himself ; and just then the strain rose again :

“ There's none, I know, on earth below,  
Could treasure and dote on my love like me ;  
The laughter and tears of my inmost soul  
Rush out in a stream to thee !

There's hardly a place in my heart's deep cell  
To hold the wealth that on thee I'd pour ;  
And I sit alone all the long, long hours,  
While a heaving joy swells through tearful showers,  
In my fondness for thee asthore ! ”

Again the singer was evidently interrupted, and Tim, in a fever of excitement, resumed his climb more vigorously than ever, nor stopped a moment till, breathless and exhausted, he reached the edge of the wood. Here, partly from the enchantment of the sight he saw, partly from lack of motive force, he came to a standstill. Not a hundred yards from where he stood was Aileen McCarthy, sporting with a dog, and making a pretence of driving home the cows.

“ Magrina, Magrina, Magrinashin oge,  
Come hither, my Laidis, come, Kitty, you rogue ! ”

she sang ; and then, all heedless of her charge, she would run, with her broad sun hat down her back and her hair escaping from its fastenings, and the dog, barking wildly, would rush after her, and, overtaking her, pounce upon her and almost bear her to the ground. Then she would replace her hat, and, going after the cows, begin to sing again :

“ Come Kitty, you rogue, come Blackbird, come Snow ! ”

—only, however, to go off as before, careering with that madcap of a dog.

Mr. O'Keefe, from his leafy retreat, gazed in fascination at the delicious picture. “ The purtiest girl in County Kerry,” he soliloquized. “ But, bedad, it's the quare tastes she has entoiirely to let a brute baste kiss her, an' slap me in the face when I troy, though the taste av the darlint's lips is worth a heap av slaps.” With that he advanced from his hiding-place and leaped lightly over the low wall

into the pasture-land. The dog was the first to observe him, and, fired with sudden jealousy, raised his bristles and ran to meet him, growling viciously.

"Come back, Teagh; come here, sir!" called Aileen; and Teagh, with one eye reproachfully on his mistress, and the other threateningly on the intruder, slowly obeyed.

"Faix, Aileen, I'm thinkin' that Teagh must be rather ag'in' me," called out Tim, by way of greeting.

"He sees so few people in this wilderness that he's strange," answered Aileen.

"Is it wilderness ye'll be afther callin' it, Aileen?" said Tim, smiling in his most ravishing manner. "Bedad, thin, an' it's mesilf would loike to be livin' in this same wilderness wid a fairy loike you sportin' round."

There was no circumlocution about Tim's gallantry. The sentiment in his mind he expressed plainly, believing that the naked truth is ever most effective. Aileen received the announcement with no extravagant marks of joy. Indeed, it might have seemed that Tim's speech was not altogether agreeable to her.

"It's afther standin' down there loike wan in a drame I am, Aileen," he declared, nothing abashed. "Bedad, an' savin' yer presence, an' no flathery at all at all, it was a purty pictir to see ye running round wid Teagh, there, an' singin' an' drivin' the cows 'twixt times. I'll go bail, now, the sorra a feelin' ye had in yer bones that I was lookin' on wid my own two eyes."

"Not a feeling, Mr. O'Keefe," answered Aileen.

"It's too polite ye are, entoirely, to a man that hasn't got wan taste av pride in his howl body," returned Mr. O'Keefe. "Just call me Tim, if ye please. I'm only Misther O'Keefe to the varmint below," indicating the country generally with a twist of his thumb. "The praste called me Timothy, thinkin', maybe, av the 'postle, the howly man, but Tim's shorter an' swater loike, so jist call me Tim, if ye please."



The girl smiled a trifle ironically, and lifted her eyes to the vast array of mountains above.

"Any news from below?" she asked, presently.

"Och! just the ould thing," answered Tim. "Ruction, destruction, divarsion an' divilment, widout anything particularly sarious. Fair-day's over, as ye know, an' gale-day's come an' gone, an' nobody kilt, which is more av a blissin' than ye moight look for."

"Maybe things will go better with the tenants now," said Aileen, simply.

"Maybe," said Tim, significantly.

Something in his tone struck her, and she turned upon him quickly.

"Do you doubt it?" she asked.

"Och, sure, an' it's not av them things a young cailin loike you should be thinkin', at all at all," returned Tim. "Bad cess to them! what needs ye be after throublin' yer purty head wid 'em?"

He would have said more, but Aileen, perceiving somewhat suddenly that the sun was on the point of setting, made a dart at the dilatory kine.

"How late it is!" she exclaimed, making no excuse for interrupting him. "I should have been home long ago."

Tim resorted to various devices to delay her, but nothing could induce Aileen to slacken her pace; and, while Tim was still eloquently arguing against her haste, they reached the house. Aileen's father was at the door, and stepped forward to receive his visitor in a manner that had a great deal more of etiquette than cordiality in it. Aileen herself followed the cows, for they had to be tied up and milked.

Dennis McCarthy was approaching life's terminus, with many scars and a large stock of bitter memories. In his youth he had been one of the "Young Ireland" band who blindly worshipped O'Connell and fervently banned the Union. Of his early associates, more than one had gone to the gallows, and others had endured a living death in

penal servitude, and no two had been suffered to abide together. Dennis wandered about the country for a time a sort of semi-fugitive ; then returned to his native district and rented the small farm of Ferndyke, determined forever to forswear politics and patriotism. But his evil fate pursued him. When his son grew up, he, too, must needs have a slash at the Gordian knot, and in consequence was brought home one night on a stretcher, shot by authority of the law. Dennis then found himself with two additional mouths to fill and two additional backs to clothe ; for the young man had left a widow and infant daughter entirely dependent on him. The young widow soon followed her husband, as did also the young man's mother, leaving Dennis alone with his daughter and grandchild. All these things had left rankling memories, and Dennis once more spoke openly and bitterly of the curse of his country.

Aileen, however, was a dutiful daughter, and Kathleen had pretty ways that soothed the old man and softened his malignant feeling. Partly by reason of this, and partly by reason of the disabilities of age and its greater desire for quiet, he gradually came to think less of revenge and ill-will. After his turbulent course, he was fain to call a truce, if so be that the oppressor would let him work quietly. And so the fiery, impetuous man grew cautious—cautious in speech as in act, speaking in a low tone and weighing his words, as if unsuspected treason might lurk in the most innocent of them. In the company of such persons as Tim O'Keefe he was doubly careful, well knowing how apt in construction the loyalty of a bailiff is.

There was only general talk between the two men, therefore, until Aileen entered ; but then, by an adroit manœuvre on the part of Tim, the conversation turned quickly to the proceedings at the rent office. Once started, Mr. O'Keefe recounted, with great gusto, laughing often as he

made a facetious or sarcastic point, and specially relishing his own reference to Ned Blake.

"He come in the mornin' as white an' tremblin' as if he had just parted wid the banshee," he said, "an' wanted Misther Wheelan to take less than half the rent. It was one of the most comical sights I have seen."

"An' did Misther Wheelan take it?" asked Dennis.

"He did," replied Tim.

Dennis was on the point of remarking on the humanity of the agent, when Tim resumed: "He did, because Misther Wheelan niver refused money that I have heard of, but he tould Ned, plump an' plain, he needn't be expectin' any favors; an' I don't know, av coorse, all that's in Misther Wheelan's mind, for it's loike a full bottle of porter, ye can't see far into it; but I have my own thoughts."

He glanced sideways at Aileen, and shook his head sapiently.

The old man looked at Tim interrogatively, but did not think it right to speak.

"My moind on the matter is this," continued Tim sententiously, "that offerin' half the rint was just a ruse to ketch Misther Wheelan, an' that Ned had been put up to it, though he made a fine show of bein' sorry he couldn't pay the howl lot. Anyway when the tinants comed with Father O'Halloran, who might have knowed better, marchin' loike me Lord General Commander-in-Chafe at their head, there was me bould Ned in the heart av thim as keen as a newly set razor, an' Misther Wheelan didn't fail to take notice av it neither." He paused for a second, so that the full purport of his speech might be taken in, then went on: "An' him an' the rest av thim, too, are loikely, before all's over, to repint that same cocky march av theirs."

"Very foolish, very foolish," said the old man, shaking his head, having reference not to the prospective repent-

ance of the tenants but to their demand for a reduction."

"An' I suppose it'll mane another clearance."

"It's not for the loikes av me to be passin' opinions out av school, as the saying is," returned Tim, astutely. "But I shouldn't be surproised. Mind, I don't say ye're right, only that ye may be."

Aileen rose abruptly under pretence of attending to something in another room, and went out into the open air, her face strangely pale and agitated. She raised her hand to her head as though she were in pain, and leaned heavily against the wall of the house.

Night had now fallen. A star was burning resplendently on the crown of Carntual, and one by one others were discovering themselves in the wide spaces of the sky; and presently the moon rose, solemnly mounting upward, and wrapping Aileen in a garment of white light. She stood there gazing vacantly upon the silvered landscape until she was recalled by the click of the door-latch. Tim O'Keefe was going away. She bade him good-night with a strained politeness, and hurried into the house.

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## CHAPTER VII.

SERIOUSLY pondering the desperate turn of affairs which had so suddenly taken place, Sandy McTear was vaguely conscious of the want, in his own mind, of a due and becoming horror of the impending catastrophe. It is not hence to be inferred, however, that he had any sordid or selfish satisfaction in the misfortunes of his neighbors. The cause of his complacency in the present painful crisis was moral and spiritual, not material. These troubles might afford him an opportunity of doing good ; they might help him to bring to a happy issue certain plans he had had in his mind for some time. These were his sole grounds for feeling contented with harrowing spectacles on every hand of him.

Sandy felt that his opportunity had come with the calamity of the tenants ; and, taken all in all, he was happy.

In that dignified interview by the wayside recorded in the first chapter of our story, Ned took it upon himself to call Sandy an *old* gentleman. The designation must not be taken as implying that Sandy's heartiness or relish of life had in anywise abated. As a matter of fact, Sandy was as young as any man in the parish, though he owned to fifty years, and as eager to do his duty.

At present his duty pointed towards the widow Blake ; so he decided it would be no more than a neighborly and courteous act to call on her and assure her of his sympathy, and, if necessary, his assistance. As it was to be a visit of state, he resolved to go in court dress ; and accordingly he proceeded to lay out his suit of tawny, shining broadcloth—which had shed its air of clerical respect-

ability on wakes, weddings, communions, funerals, and other special outings, ever since his father's death, some fifteen or twenty years before—an enormous collar, sometime white, but now rivaling the sky of a summer's day, a stiff black stock, a very ancient tall hat, rather damaged in the color and the fur, and a pair of stout Blücher-boots. It was an operose business getting them all carefully extracted from the trunk, and when it was accomplished he surveyed the pile with manifest satisfaction.

"It's only respectful to the pair body to go in my best," he said to himself, leisurely beginning to dress.

I should not like to state how long it took him to make his toilet. Were I to say it took him an hour and a half, some people might possibly get the impression he was vain, and this impression might be strengthened if I told how long and how frequently he paused in his operations to look in the cracked mirror which so horribly distorted his visage, or with what concern he brushed his straggling locks across the cranium from right to left, then from left to right, and back again from right to left; or how he tried the stock upside down, or debated with himself whether he should leave a little corner of his handkerchief hanging outside his coat tails or crush it all into his pocket, or, finally, whether it was becoming to wear a large silver watch chain on what was properly a mourning waistcoat. All these particulars I may pass over, and state that at last, after rubbing his hat carefully till its fur was as smooth as that on the back of a fighting cat, he caught it by the spacious brim with both hands and slowly but firmly pushed it down on his head till it rested securely on his ears. Then giving his head a shake to make sure it could not budge, he seized his robust alpaca umbrella, neatly tied at the mouth like a sack, and sallied forth.

The sun had set some time before he started, and the moon had not yet risen, but stars burned vividly in a pale silver sky, so that the night, though dusky, was full of

light. Sandy looked up at the glittering firmament—for he was a confirmed star-gazer—filled with strange thoughts, and suddenly a vision of his mother rose before him as she had been nearly half a century before. Her tones were in his ear, the ballads she had taught him were on his tongue. Much had he forgotten, but these he still remembered :

“ Oh waly, waly, up the bank,  
And waly, waly, down the brae,  
And waly, waly, yon burn side  
Where I and my love wont to gae.”

Sandy pulled himself up with a start.

“ Eh, dear me, what could have put that into my head,” he demanded of himself. “ One would almost think I was gaen gyte.”

When he reached Arraghlow he was mightily pleased to see a glimmer of light in the window, for somehow he had had an idea that he should find Mrs. Blake sitting disconsolately in the dark.

“ No sae bad at a’,” he commented, “ there is licht anyway.”

He knocked on the door very circumspectly with the handle of his alpaca umbrella, and waited for the response with bated breath. None came. He tapped again, and there was a stir within. Sandy coughed in a smothered way, stroked his chin, and with a nervous rush ran his hand over his collar and stock just as the door opened. He bowed to the indistinct figure that stood in the doorway in his own fine antique fashion, and ventured the remark that it was a “ braw night.”

“ Misther McTear, I think,” said the voice of Mrs. Blake, from among the shadows.

“ At your service, mem,” answered Sandy, gallantly, “ and I hope I have the pleasure of seeing you in your ordinar’ health.”

"Thank ye, sor ; I'm purty well, considerin'," said the widow. "But step inside, Misther McTear."

Sandy prudently removed his hat, and, with a genuflectional motion, for the entrance was rather low, followed the widow. She was alone, and Sandy felt strangely embarrassed. He did not take the chair she offered him beside the small lamp and in front of the fire, but sought another among the smoke in a corner, where he sat as upright as though he were encased in a coat of unbending mail, the hat carefully pressed on one knee, and the abominous umbrella leaning against the other.

"Ned's not at home, Mrs. Blake, I see," he said, after at least a dozen unsuccessful attempts to clear his throat.

"No, an' it's feared I am something's wrong when he's not back from Dunbriggan," answered the widow. "He promised to be back before dark."

"Hoot-toot, ye mauna be thinkin' the like o' that," said Sandy, with what might have seemed unnecessary abruptness of utterance. "Ye forget that Ned's young, and that young men hae cronies an' lasses an' mony things forbye that old fowk ken naething about. When I was his age I daursay I wasnae in a nicht till it chappit twal, or maybe the wee short hour ayont it. Fegs, I have got lockit out, an' I'll wager a bawbee that has not happened to Ned yet."

One might have imagined from his tone and language that Sandy had been an abandoned reprobate in his youth, whereas he had always been an exemplar to his companions.

"I am always afeared something may happen, or he may do something, he's in such throuble these times," responded the widow.

"This is a vale o' sufferin', mem," said Sandy in an altered voice. "I've hard something."

The widow rose with a deep sigh, and, going to a press



or cupboard, took out an official-looking paper which she handed to Sandy.

"Look at that," she said, and sank into a chair beside him.

Sandy held the paper toward the light and began to read it.

"God bless us !" he exclaimed suddenly, letting hat and umbrella fall together. "God bless me, mem ! I'm clean dumfounded. Mrs. Blake, mem, let me say that if——" He stopped and coughed. "Ha, the de'il take them a' ! I'm rale sorry. Ou, ou, but its a sair business, Mrs. Blake, and at your time o' life, too ! You have my sympathy, mem."

"Thank ye, sir," returned the widow, swallowing a sob.

"Lord preserve us and keep us frae the like o' this," said Sandy fervently. "But, bide ye," he added immediately, in a cheerier tone. "Ye'll hae canty times yet. The sun ayè sets to rise again. Dinna be breakin' your heart. You have friends." He looked in a singular way at the widow. His face was flushed, and it was plain he was a trifle excited. "You have friends," he repeated, still looking at her intently. He was on the point of making a very gallant declaration, but his courage failed him, or he thought better of it, and he broke off weakly with : "Ah, Mrs. Blake, I canna tell how sorry I am."

"It'll be worse than '49, when the people died of starvation quicker than they could be buried," said Mrs. Blake, dolefully. "I'm sure I don't know what's to become of us. I sometimes wish—but listen, here comes Ned," and as she spoke the door opened and Ned entered. Sandy was startled at the change a few days had wrought in his appearance. His face was haggard, his eyes strange and he seemed ten years older than fair-day. He smiled, however, as his eye fell on Sandy.

"Och, Misther McTear," he said, "it's you. Faix, didn't I think it was his riverence ! Yer as black as if ye were

dressed to attend yer own funeral. Oh, you have seen this paper?" he said, with a sudden strain of anger, catching up the document that lay beside Sandy.

"And I'm sorry, Ned," said Sandy, sympathetically.

"My curse on it an' on them that sent it!" cried Ned, casting it on the floor and stamping on it with his feet. "I wish I had their heads there. I'd show them what it is to be down wid people jumping on ye."

He drew himself up with a flashing eye and pale, compressed lips. Sandy glanced at the widow. Her face was white and her eyes were fastened on her son in terror. All at once Ned stepped up to Sandy and held out his hands.

"Do you think this thing's right, Mither McTear," he demanded, his passion making him speak huskily. "Look at them hands; feel them. What has made every finger I have like a carrot, and my hand like a horse's hoof? I'll tell ye. It's makin' a slave av mesilf for them that's to thank me by pitchin' me headfirst out av the dure. An' what right have they, Mither McTear? tell me that," he went on, as though Sandy were somehow responsible for the whole thing. "Hasn't everything about this house and place been done by me or them that went afore me? Haven't I drained, haven't I fenced, haven't I manured till I got crops out of the very stones for them? An' who built this house they call theirs? It was my father, and when it run down I put a new roof on it an' made it fit to live in, an' what did they do? They raised me rint; an' every year it was the same. The harder I worked, the more I had to pay. You tell me it's the law. Who made the law that gives them the right to take what is not theirs? Curse them an' their law! It's not law, but robbery; an' they'll get my things when they have killed me, an' not a minute sooner."

Mrs. Blake started to her feet with terrified eyes and a little scream.

"Don't be saying that, Ned," she pleaded, laying her hand on his arm. "They can have everything, everything, if they only lave me you."

Ned looked at her, and his fury died in an instant.

"I'm better now that it's out, mother," he said gently, "and don't you be after troublin' yer head about it. An' faix, to tell ye the truth, I'm monstrous hungry. An' here's Mither McTear thinks there's nobody can make tay like you."

Sandy rose, protesting that "indeed he couldna eat a bite or drink a drap," as he had had a substantial supper just before starting. But Ned, good-humoredly disregarding his protest, pushed him back into a chair, where he sat passively till the tea was on the table. Then, at Mrs. Blake's invitation, he said one of the good old-fashioned Scotch graces, somewhat longer than a modern sermon, which made Ned rather impatient.

"Faix, Mither McTear," said Ned, when Sandy had at length finished, "it's yourself that's bully on the graces. Ye could tache Father O'Halloran himself."

"Oh," returned Sandy, modestly, "that was naething. It couldna hae been longer than fifteen minutes, an' I have heard my father, the deacon, say grace for half-an-hour."

"Bedad thin, an' I'd be afther askin' him to put the grace as a top, instead of a foundation to the male," said Ned, laughing. And he went on chattering as was his wont, as though he had the merriest heart in Christendom.

It was only when he went to the door with Sandy that he made any further reference to what was uppermost in his mind.

"We're goin' to have a falde day on Sunday," he whispered confidentially, "but don't be tellin' her."

"Ay, ay," said Sandy, "an' I hope ye'll come to nae hairm."

## CHAPTER VIII.

ON Sunday morning Father O'Halloran had an immense, an eager, an excited, a preoccupied, and scandalously inattentive congregation. Not for years had so many young men been seen in the chapel at one time. People fidgeted on their seats, consulted their watches and in divers other ways indicated their lack of sympathy. It was not till the preacher stopped\* preaching, and in a low solemn voice began to speak about the coming meeting that he thoroughly and completely riveted the attention of his audience. Father O'Halloran himself seemed to feel the unusual weight of the occasion, for he spoke with unwonted earnestness; indeed his emotion interfered with his utterances, so that some of his words had to be guessed at towards the close.

"I shall be there and some more of your friends," he said, after formally announcing the meeting, "to see whether anything can be done to alleviate the present sore distress. I have just one request to make of you, it is this: that you will now and always remember that any attempted violence on your part will but aggravate your own condition. We hope that the day-spring of liberty is not now far off, and that the broad full sun of prosperity will again shine on our unhappy land. But, whether afar off or near, physical force will not hasten the change. Remember that it is part of the enemy's plan to provoke you to unseemly deeds, the better to justify his own oppressions. Keep this perpetually in mind. Be patient, and God be with you."

The service concluded, and the people trooped out, to gather in eager knots and gesticulate and talk of the coming salvation of Ireland. Then, as the chapel bell began to peal a tocsin, they repaired to an adjoining field where they were speedily joined by crowds from every point of the compass, for half a dozen parishes had been notified of the meeting. By-and-by Father O'Halloran entered the field, accompanied by several members of Parliament, journalists, and others who were favorable to the National cause. A tremendous and prolonged cheer greeted them. A rude platform had been erected on the top of a small knoll, and round this the multitude pressed as the speakers took their places. Then, just as, after a great deal of scrambling, everybody had got comfortably wedged into the mass, the tramp of many feet was heard in the road hard by, and a moment later a strong contingent of police wheeled into the field and advanced to the centre of attraction with the tread and carriage of Grenadiers. Sub-Inspector Buckingham, his sword drawn, his chest expanded, and the spirit of Napoleon in his gait, marched at the head ; and, coming up to the solid human wall, ordered it to open out and let his men pass into the centre. Everyone heard, and no one thought it in the least incumbent on himself to obey ; so that the Sub-Inspector was obliged to halt his men. He frowned truculently, and a satirical gurgle welled up.

"Can't ye be makin' way for the honest gintleman wid his peelers ?" called a voice. "Bad cess to yez ! have ye no manners, at all, at all, to be after kapin' the pride av their counthry standin' there in the could wid their fingers in their mouths ?"

A great explosion of laughter followed this pleasantry.

Sub-Inspector Buckingham's brow darkened, and the blade at his shoulder jerked in a thirsty fashion.

"Make way there, I say, or I'll order my men to use their arms," he cried angrily.

Father O'Halloran, perceiving how things were going, rose and made a gesture for silence.

"Silence till his Riverence speaks," came simultaneously from a hundred throats, and immediately there was quietness.

"Gentlemen," said Father O'Halloran blandly, "let the police pass. I assure you they mean no harm."

"Sure an yer Riverence is right," was the good-humored response.

After most extraordinary exertions, a way was at length made that would admit the police, in Indian file. Sub-Inspector Buckingham, looking grimmer than ever, stepped into the opening, followed by his men as they could.

Treading closely on the heels of the police, and showing a tremulous disposition to avoid observation, came a gentleman with a very white face, attired in the latest London fashion. No sooner did the people catch sight of him, skulking behind the last constable, and trying, as it were, to sneak in, than a cry of "Government Spy" rose. While the cry was still in the air a score of brawny arms were stretched out to lay hold of him, and two of them succeeded in seizing the tails of his stylish frock coat. With a jerk and a jeering remark he was pulled back, ere one of the police could turn to his assistance.

"Mr. Buckingham! Mr. Buckingham!" cried the man in great fear, for it was his first visit to Ireland and he thought his hour was come. "I shall be killed! Mr. Buckingham, Mr. Buckingham!"

Mr. Buckingham turned promptly, and, perceiving the plight of the cockney, crimsoned with rage.

"I'll cut every man of you down if you don't let the Government reporter forward this instant," he roared.

"Faix an' it's modest his honor is," commented one humorist, whose sole vocation was observation and remark. "Moight'nt he lave just wan av us to tell how nately he did it."

"Men, bring Mr. Chitterley forward, and use your bayonets if necessary," ordered the Sub-Inspector.

At this the crowd growled angrily and surged up on either side of the police in two great waves, effectually preventing them from carrying out the order.

"Disarm them, boys, an' let them have a taste av their own stale," shouted some one.

Sub-Inspector Buckingham raised his right arm with an oath, and his sword flashed fiercely in the sun. But the next instant it was knocked from his grasp, and a dozen feet were trampling it on the ground.

Meantime Mr. Chitterley had not been neglected. His hat had been knocked over his eyes, and now wanted the crown and half the brim; his coat had lost a tail, and his collar was curling like a snake about the back of his neck. Then there was a pause and they heard some one shouting. "Men, men, I beseech you to desist! For God's sake, I pray you to desist!"

The voice was Father O'Halloran's and it acted like magic. The crowd fell back, the police clutched the dragged reporter and pushed him forward to the platform, and, being unable to lay hands on the principal offenders, arranged themselves about the platform, nursing their wrath for another time. Father O'Halloran, who had been down among the crowd, advanced with the Sub-Inspector's sword, which he presented, with a low bow to its owner.

"I am sorry you should have lost it, Mr. Buckingham," he said, quietly. "I believe it is considered rather a mark of disgrace in an officer of Her Majesty to be deprived of his sword."

The Sub-Inspector snatched the weapon as a sulking child might snatch a plaything, sheathed it, and turned to see that his men were properly disposed.

The prologue having now been gone through, the proceedings proper were opened. The principal speakers were

Mr. Magee, member for an important Irish constituency, and Father O'Halloran. Mr. Magee spoke first, and, on rising, was received with vociferous and long-continued cheering, for he was a popular favorite. He had passed several vacations in those cool retreats which a paternal government has provided for the feverish Irish politician ; and it was understood that Sub-Inspector Buckingham and his men, and Mr. Chitterley and his note-book, were now present, with a view to arranging the preliminaries for another period of retirement. For a member of the "first assembly of gentlemen in the world," Mr. Magee was ridiculously, shockingly eccentric. He stood quietly until the commotion had subsided, then began to speak, but so lamely and haltingly that his words were inaudible thirty feet from where he stood. The rustic mind was surprised and disappointed ; for it had expected its favorite, the man of whom it had heard and read so much, to go off with a bang like a big gun. But, while it wondered at his apparent nervousness, the voice was steadily getting clearer and firmer : and, before he had spoken for ten minutes, the audience had the orator of its imagination before it, whose tones thrilled, and whose spectacles glowed as if two pieces of live coal burned behind them.

"Gentlemen," he continued, "is this Egyptian bondage I have been describing to be perpetual ? Is there to be no end to the dominion of the task-master ? Are the chains which bound your fathers, and bind you, to be handed down, unimpaired, to bind your children also ? Nay ; are you, with your own hands, to add more rivets to the bolts, so that there may be no possible escape ? Are you to allow yourselves to be defrauded out of your birthright, and to pledge posterity to an everlasting serfdom ? Are you to bow the knee submissively to the tyrant, and say : 'We have no rights, our children will have no rights ; do unto us and them what seemeth to you good ?' Will you do this ? No ! a thousand times, no ! Better have your right



arms torn from your bodies, better be mown down by famine and the sword, as in times past, than act such a coward's part !

"Gentlemen, there is the submission of slaves and the submission of freemen : the voluntary submission of the strong man, conscious of equal rights and equal protection, and the coerced submission of the weak, who is unable to withhold what is demanded of him. Ireland has been whipped, scourged, maltreated, cheated, continually and consistently, for seven centuries. Is it not high time she were given a taste of that favorite dish of the Englishman—justice ?

"I see before me to-day," he went on, after a pause, so brief that the people had not time to cheer, "those who have striven in a manner which Englishmen can never understand, to lead honest and industrious lives, and who have been denied the opportunity. Every step of progress was the signal for fresh impositions. You are rack-rented, harried and persecuted. It is time to assert your rights. Just demands you will strive to meet, but monstrous, cruel demands you will resist while you have strength and breath. It is time that the Irish peasant were put on a par at least with the landlord's carriage-horse or hunter. Be men ; act your part, and doubt not, sooner or later, you will have victory. Your cause is just, and all you want is courage. Courage, and evermore courage !"

He stopped, and, for the space of half a minute or so, there was the stillness of death ; then, with one impulse the multitude sent up its mighty roar, which was repeated again, and again and again. When Father O'Halloran rose he had to stand several minutes while the audience was venting its enthusiasm. But when silence again fell, the attention was, if possible, closer than had been accorded even to Mr. Magee ; for throughout the entire length and breadth of the land no priest was more ven-

erated than Father O'Halloran. If his people had any fault to find with him, if they ever ventured to criticise his conduct, it was because of his peaceable disposition, his desire to avoid disturbances. Over and over again he had pleaded for forbearance, and checked in its incipency the spirit of revolt and revenge. As year by year, however, he saw the distress about him grow direr and direr, and the hope of victory for which he was waiting grow more and more remote, he began to exhibit a more militant spirit. But even then he was as studiously moderate in counsel as he was in act.

He began to speak in a low voice, slowly and distinctly with a strain of sadness as though he regretted the necessity of speaking at all. And, indeed, that meeting was to him a positive and poignant evil which cast very dark and tragic shadows all around. It seemed to him, looking on the stern and haggard faces before him, that not a few of the devilish elements which had produced the French Revolution were ready to burst out and kindle another universal conflagration. He was like a man on the brink of a precipice, above a gulf of unfathomed depth, who feels that his only safety lies in holding back, and yet, desperately and eagerly takes the plunge. With the first sentence that he spoke, Father O'Halloran had a dizzying sense of disaster, that remained with him to the end.

The people, on the other hand, were astonished and delighted to hear him talk so firmly and with so little of his usual spirit of temporizing.

The speaker urged them to resistance. He no longer spoke in the low measured tones in which he had begun. His voice had risen to its full compass, and his points were made with the emphasis of thunder-claps. And then, all at once, he trembled, clasped his hands, and raised his eyes to heaven.

"Lord! why hast Thou forsaken us?" he cried, his voice quivering with emotion. "The enemy is upon us.

The whole land trembleth at the sound of the neighing of his mighty ones ; for they have come and have devoured the land and all that is in it. Why is the kingdom plucked up and pulled down to be destroyed ? Let prosperity shine on us again. Let Thy people be adorned in their tabrets, and go forth in the dance of them that make merry. Let the planters plant, and eat of that they have planted. For now our inheritance is turned to strangers, our houses to aliens, our necks are under persecution, we labor and have no rest. They that hate us rule over us ; and we are minished and brought low through oppression, affliction and sorrow. Almighty Father ! rich in compassion, great in power, hear us and deliver us ; and if the enemy's heart be hardened like Pharaoh's of old, so that he will not hearken, prepare him unto blood, and let blood pursue him, and sith he hath not hated blood, even let blood pursue him. Bring him forth and put hooks in his jaws. Set a wicked man over him, even as he has set wicked men over us ; and when he is judged, let him be condemned. Let his children be vagabonds and beg. Let the extortioner catch all that he hath, and let the stranger spoil his labor. Confound him in his going out and in his coming in. Let there be none to extend mercy unto him ; neither let there be any favor to his fatherless children."

He stopped abruptly, as though his maledictions, burning with all the ancient Hebrew passion for vengeance, struck terror to his own heart.

"Yet not this either, Lord," he pleaded, in a voice that was touching and piteous. "Rather would we have him moved to mercy and justice. Lord, we are troubled and weak ; do Thou help us !"

He stopped again, as though his power of speech had left him. When he resumed, his voice was broken and his eyes were moist.

God of this Irish Isle,  
Blesséd and old ;  
Wrapt in the morning's smile,  
In the sea's fold—  
Here, where Thy saints have trod,  
Here, where they prayed,  
Hear us, oh, saving God,  
Lend us Thy aid.

God of the circling sea,  
Far-rolling and deep,  
Its caves are unshut to Thee,  
Its bounds Thou dost keep ;  
Here——”

But he could go no further. The strong frame shook, the quavering voice broke, and his head fell with a sob.

The breath went out of the multitude, as if it beheld a supernatural manifestation. The speaker had completely magnetized his audience. It had thrilled with satisfaction at the start, it had risen to a palpitating and fearful glee at his imprecations ; it had sunk to softness at his pleadings ; it had almost wept at the helplessness of humanity during his prayer for succor. His every change of tone had found an immediate response in its heart ; and when he stopped it seemed as though its very being had been sucked up in that sob. The paralysis lasted only a moment, however, and then such a shout went up as is rarely heard at such meetings, even in Ireland.

Father O'Halloran retired to his seat and another speaker came forward. He stood for a little waiting for the attention of the people, but they were not to be deprived of the privilege of cheering to their hearts' content, and so continued to shout. The police made some movement as though they would restore quiet, and the crowd resented the slightest look of interference. The police were jeered and told to mind their own business, and a tumult of angry

words arose. Father O'Halloran got to his feet and called and gesticulated for silence ; but he was too late, a man had struck a constable with a pebble and the police were pushing about to get hold of the offender. The inevitable result followed. The police were roughly shouldered and pushed in turn, and the Sub-Inspector, remembering his old grievances, ordered them to fix bayonets. The crowd closed up with a shout, as though to prevent the carrying out of the order. One of two magistrates present pulled out a paper from which he read something that no one heard, and before those on the platform could tell exactly what was happening, the people were recoiling from a volley of musketry. One or two men fell, several more were wounded, and, with their cries of pain, went up a wild howl of rage from the multitude generally. Father O'Halloran, Mr. Magee, and the other speakers rushed down from their place to interfere ; but the crowd, maddened beyond all restraint, would not listen to a word they said. "Down wid them !" shouted several voices, "Down wid the murtherers !" and again the billow surged forward.

"Ready ! Present !" called the Sub-Inspector. The police raised their rifles and took aim, and instantly the advancing wave broke and fell away. Then the police rushed in among the scattering crowd, and succeeded in making several prisoners, among the number being Ned Blake, whom they lifted from the ground severely wounded. The people rallied presently, and came back, shouting they would rescue their friends ; but the rifles being again lifted to receive them, they retired, yelling execrations. The police kept possession of the field for nearly an hour, then marched away, taking their prisoners with them.

## CHAPTER IX.

AILEEN MCCARTHY, looking out upon the world from the altitude of Ferndyke, on that peaceful Sabbath afternoon, thought it, on the whole, a very pleasant place to live in. She felt the joyous pervasiveness of the sunshine, the delicious and ineffable freshness and fragrance of the air; and she was satisfied. For the mind within had undergone a change and was as untroubled as the face of nature without.

She and her father, and little Kathleen sat on a grassy knoll some distance above the house, for it was so pleasant to idle out of doors on that fine summer day. She had been reading to them, but she laid the paper aside ere she was half through the article.

"I like talking to you better than reading," she said in explanation.

Kathleen, who was in no way sorry to see the paper dropped, crept closer to her grandfather and took his hand.

"Tell us something," she said.

Dennis looked down at the clear, dimpled face, and black sparkling eyes.

"Your father's face," he said, stroking the rippling hair. "Many's the time I have seen him look like that."

"Well," said Kathleen, nothing flattered, "tell us a story of what happened long, long ago, before he was born, you know; when you were young and the boys

went out to fight the soldiers with guns and things. You remember that bit of poetry you have about the kilties :

‘ Long life to the butchers, and long may they reign,  
They leathered the kilties in Annahagh Lane. ’

Those times, you know,” and she settled herself to listen.

“ Yes, father, tell us something,” said Aileen, and the old man, nothing loth, began his rehearsal. Aileen was almost as fond of hearing him recount the exploits of his youth as her little niece. Time and again had she listened to the story, but somehow it always had fresh fascinations. Those doings of her father’s in the far-away time, with companions now all gone, sounded to her like a bit of some old romance.

“ Them was surely the days for ould Ireland,” said Dennis, with gentle enthusiasm ; “ an’ I, for wan, niver expect to hear av her seein’ the likes av them agen. It kind av warms me blood just to think av them, though they did cost me so dear.”

He tapped the bowl of his black cob pipe meditatively against the edge of his boot.

“ To be sure I have seed some cur’us things,” he resumed. “ I’ll be seventy by next gale day, an’ though I have learned the value of pace, still an’ all, I must say the boys in them days had mighty few white livers ’mongst them. I ’member well seein’ Dick Sullivan, the great-grandson av Rapparee Sullivan, as we used to call him, go up to a souldier standin’ on guard wid a big gun an’ baynit, in the open strates av the city av Cork, an’ knock him down, an’ sorra a word was there about it but the scrames av the red-coat. An’ wanst, too, when some Sassenachs were makin’ game av Dan O’Connell in Barney O’Brien’s public house in Tralee, faix ! weren’t they rowlin’ on the flure afore they knowed anything at all about it.”

He took his pipe from his mouth, laid it on the grass

beside him, and went on: "But it was not the boys that was so nate wid the shillelah that plazes me best to think av, but the big men, the mimbers av parlymint, and them that addressed big meetin's, where thousands an' thousands av the boys would gather to hear the spaches an' do any little job that was on hand. Well I 'member the day av Clontarf, when Dan O'Connell was to make a spache, an' the howl counthry was to listen to him. We was all goin' in when the messenger met us wid the news that the p'lice an' red-coats were to prevent it, an' there was to be no meetin'. Some av the boys cursed the messenger, and Dan, too, an' others cursed their own sows. It was very wrong," reflected Dennis, "but, ye see, the pore boys was that excited they couldn't express their feelin's no other way."

He took up his pipe, lighted it slowly, and began to smoke.

"You haven't told us about papa yet," cried Kathleen, with a coquettish smile, as if it were a thing to make light of.

"There's not much to tell, Kathleen," said the old man, stroking the young head. "Leastways, a few words will tell a great dale. He went out wan night, an' when he comed back, I axed him what was the matter, an' he didn't spake, an' that's all."

He lifted his eyes to the mountains, the slightest quiver on his lips.

"Come," cried Aileen, getting to her feet. "Let's go and see the cows." And they went, Kathleen and Teagh romping on in front, and Aileen and her father walking together. As they walked, the first cheer came up from below.

"Like ould times," said Dennis; "the boys are clearin' their throats."

"I hope they'll have the sense to behave themselves," returned Aileen.



"Father O'Halloran's there," said the old man, "an where he is, there's sure to be pace."

As they walked leisurely along they heard more cheering. All seemed to be going satisfactorily, and neither Dennis nor Aileen was disposed to make the meeting a subject of conversation. The truth is they expected nothing from it, and took little interest in it. It was simply a protest, repeated for the ten-thousandth time, against a policy that had been too long in operation to receive any serious check, now, at the hands of a crowd of tenants and one or two speakers.

Secretly, Aileen was hardly sorry, now, that it should be so. Not that she could ever approve of such proceedings as were likely to be witnessed within the next few weeks; but, in regard to the impending calamity, she had plans which would put a new face on things and enable her to contemplate them, if not with positive joy, at least without positive sorrow.

In promising to be Ned Blake's wife, there was one point on which Aileen's conscience had always pricked her. Happy, as she fancied she could be with Ned, she could never reconcile herself to the prospect of forsaking her father. It had been a sore difficulty with her. Many and many an hour had she spent vainly thinking of it; and lo! here, suddenly, a way was opened to happiness for them all. For, instead of her going to Ned, could Ned and his mother, not come to her? The plan seemed to her to have another advantage, besides the supreme one of letting them all live together. Her father was beginning to suffer seriously from the disabilities of age, and must soon be laid aside. Who could better relieve him of his heavy labors than an active, intelligent son-in-law, like Ned? Surely, no one. And then, when the dark, final event of earth—which God long postpone!—came to her father, her husband could enter the farm in his own name, and he and she could toil and be happy together.

While she was busy with speculations concerning the fair future, all at once there broke upon her ear the ominous roll of musketry.

"God in heaven!" she exclaimed, with a start of terror, "The police are firing on them!" She and her father paused instinctively to listen. They heard the tumultuous howl of rage rising and echoing among the rocks and the valleys, and each saw in the face of the other the same terrible look of consternation.

"They're killing each other," said Aileen, in a gasp. "Father, I must go down and see what is happening."

"No, no," cried her father, in shrill and feeble protest, "do not go, Aileen! I might lose ye as I have lost others. I'll go myself."

"It would be dark before you got half-way down," answered Aileen. "Have no fear of me, I can take care of myself. Not one of them, I am sure, would seek to harm a woman. Come, let us go in."

She took his hand, and the old man, though still protesting, suffered himself to be led into the house.

Aileen hastily made the necessary alterations in her attire, and again assuring her father he need have no fear for her safety, and promising to return as soon as possible, hastened away.

To make a show of self-possession and calmness she walked while she was within view of the house, but, once out of sight she fairly ran. Her heart was beating wildly, her brain was in a whirl.

"What if he is dead!" she kept saying to herself. "Oh, why, why does the like of this happen?"

Presently she was in the woods among the briars, the interlacing roots, and the dense clumps of laurel and holly. Eager, almost frantic, as she was to make haste, and going down declivities which materially accelerated her pace, she was soon in the open again, running breathlessly across fields and climbing stiles like one in a race. In less than

half the time it usually took her to descend, she was in the highway. It was full of excited people, mostly standing in little groups, and she readily understood that the riot or whatever other disturbance there had been, was over. She turned instinctively towards Arraghlow and noticed, with a chill at her heart, that as she approached, the several groups paused in their discussions, eying her as she passed with furtive looks of commiseration.

She was almost running now, indeed turning a curve and seeing a clear road ahead, she did run till she was out of breath, and her hair came tumbling about her shoulders. The pace seemed little better than a snail's when she dropped to a walk again. All her energy seemed spent. She was panting and her feet were very heavy.

All at once she became aware of a firm masculine step by her side, and turning quickly with a thrill of expectation, she looked into the beaming countenance of Mr. Timothy O'Keefe. A sudden passion of anger and hate seized her, a longing to turn upon the man like a tigress and rend him.

"Ye should have been down sooner to see the sport," he said jauntily, disregarding the look in her face.

"You have had some sport?" she said, fixing her burning eyes on his.

"The police have," he replied indifferently. "I'm thinkin' some av the boys will have harder beds to night than last night, an' that some others 'll hardly be so spry, as the sayin' is. We have had high doin's," he went on in the same neutral tone. "Some are in jail, an' others are nursin' bullets in their bodies. On the whole, I'm thinkin' it's the biggest day Kilgroom has ever had."

Aileen made no response; she could not.

"I hope the ould man's well, Aileen," said Tim presently, nowise disconcerted by her silence, "an' faix *cushla-machree*, it's in the devil av a hurry ye are entoirely. Take it a little taste aisier or it's after killin' yerself ye'll be."

He took hold of her arm with that easy familiarity which was one of his most winning characteristics, but she shook him off as though he had been a viper.

"Don't touch me," she said, with the color flaming in her face. "Don't dare to lay a finger on me."

"Faix and that same's just what I'll be after doin' thin, me dear," responded Tim, his lightness undashed, "for be the howly chaplain—an' that same's a big oath,—afore I'm five minutes oulder, I'll have the swatest, natest little kiss that ever left honey on a man's lips or warmed the cockles av his heart. Go along wid ye, Aileen ! Begorra ! wan would think you girls didn't like kissin' at all, at all, when yer purty lips is a standin' invitation," and with a dexterous movement, which told of long practice, he slipped his arm about the girl's waist.

She sprang as if he had stabbed her, leaving the gallant Tim gaping in utter amazement.

"It's like you, Tim O'Keefe," she said, turning and flashing indignation on him, "to behave like this, at such a time. I have had enough of you. Be good enough to go your way, and let me go mine."

She turned with a stately sweep and walked away.

But Tim was not to be thrust off in this summary fashion.

"Och, an' that's a sore, sore spache, Aileen," he whined, making up to her with a great affectation of humility. "I wurship the very ground ye walk on. I'd ate the dust for yer sake—the very dust that yer swate feet have trod on. An' ye can't mane what ye said, Mavourneen. It's yerself that has the too good heart for that."

"It seems that very plain speech is necessary to convince you," she returned scornfully. "Will you understand me if I tell you that I hate you ?—that you are a mean wretch for acting and talking to me as you did ? Will that let you understand that I have had enough of your company ?"

Mr. O'Keefe came to an abrupt stand, and gazed with

wide orbs at Aileen who was walking rapidly away.

"Well, I'm d—d!" he remarked to himself, "if that's not purty language to use to the bailiff av the Kilgroom estate; but *he's* shot an' in jail, an' may he rot there!" With which pleasant sentiment he turned on his heel.

Meanwhile, Aileen was shedding a few tears, after the manner of the sex on such occasions. "Oh, the mean wretch, the coward that he is!" she cried to herself. "But I told him my mind anyway; that's one consolation."

But, presently she was thinking of other things. From Tim's manner and words there could be no doubt that Ned had been shot. Perhaps he lay dying at that minute; perhaps he was dead. She began to run again, feeling as though the suspense would drive her mad; yet, when she came within sight of Arraghlowlow, she found it necessary to stop and lean against the fence. The dizziness was but momentary, however, and she went on again quickly to the little gate in front of the house, and the gravelled walk to the door. It was ajar, and she looked in without knocking. Her brain reeled, and a sudden darkness fell on her. Mrs. Blake was sitting on a stool slowly rocking herself to and fro, with an ashy, constricted face and a low moaning noise. Ned must be dead.

## CHAPTER X.

AFTER a vigorous debate with himself, Sandy McTear had decided not to give the political meeting the sanction of his presence. "Eh, dear me!" he said to himself, in self-reprobaton for having so far forgotten himself as to debate the matter at all. "What would my father, the deacon, have said if he could hae dreamed that I would hae evened sic a thing as going to their meeting?" and Sandy shook his head as solemnly as though a whole presbytery had been looking on.

Accordingly, when the hour for beginning the said Sabbath desecration arrived, Sandy carefully locked himself in his room; took the fat Bible, his only legacy from the deceased deacon, from its dusty perch, donned his big spectacles, and sat down on the edge of his bed to hold converse with the prophets and sages of olden time.

But it so happened that the day was exceeding drowsy in the remote stillness of Sandy's chamber. Without, there was not a sound, not even so much as the barking of a dog; within, there was the sultry buzzing of half a dozen large blue flies in a corner of the window, but, somehow, their energy only seemed to add to the heaviness of the atmosphere. Even the sunshine was slumberous, and, in fine, the narcotic influence was so powerful that Moses, and Solomon, and Isaiah lost their force of spiritual stimulation, and Sandy, suddenly nodding his head, dropped book and spectacles, with a clatter, on the floor. A few seconds later there was a stertorous snort that made the flies in the corner of the window leap in panic. Sandy was snoring. As he

had nothing on his conscience nor too much on his stomach, he slept sweetly till he was roused by a violent knocking on his door.

"Come in, come in!" he called, springing up and rubbing his eyes. "Fegs! I believe I have been sleeping," he commented, *sotto voce*.

"Bedad, an' yer a comical ould gintleman," came from the outside. "How'd I be comin' in an' the durè locked?"

"And that's true," said Sandy, making haste to turn the key. "The fact is, I hae been taking a nap," he explained, as Tim O'Keefe walked in.

"It's the aisy moind ye have," said Tim, jocularly. "Slapin' sedately, an' half the parish gittin' kilt."

"What's your joke now, Tim?" asked Sandy, fancying Tim was indulging in one of his jests.

"Faix, yer the first that I ever heard callin' strames an' rivers av blood a joke," responded Tim. "Half the boys at the matin' are shot down."

"God bless me!" ejaculated Sandy, in consternation. "Who's killed? Tell me how it happened—tell me quick!" he added, impatiently.

"I can't tell ye how it happened," answered Tim, with a little smile. "I wasn't axed to the matin', an' me manners wouldn't let me go widout an invitation. All I know is, that the police had some fine practice wid their guns, an' that they're takin' away the corpses in cartloads."

"Heaven preserve us! You dumfoonder me!" exclaimed Sandy; "and d'ye no ken who's been shot?"

"A howl lot—too numerous to mention, as the sayin' is," returned Tim. "But among them's Misther Edward Blake."

Sandy gazed in blank amazement for a little, as though he were unable to comprehend all that was said to him.

"It'll set his mither crazy," he said at length. "Ou, ou, this is what comes o' breakin' the Sawbath. But we maun go and lend a hand," changing his tone. "We can maybe

do something to help the puir cratur's." And with that he began, in a great bustle of excitement, to put his person in order. "Come on," he called, when he was ready to go. "If we're to do any good, we maunna lose a minute."

But Tim shook his head.

"They wouldn't take help from the loikes av me," he said—which was only the truth.

"Aweel, aweel, I maun e'en go mysel'," said Sandy, grasping his stout walking-stick. "It's likely I'll be of little use, but I'll try, anyway." And he locked the door, putting the key in his pocket. "They're a daft, fechtin', capreecious set, that are never content wi' hale heads, but maun be forever 'cloorin'' each other, as they ca' it."

Tim watched him for a little, a sinister grin on his face. "I'll take care Mither Wheelan knows av this, *anyway*," he said to himself.

Sandy was soon on the highway among the groups of people, questioning them eagerly, and receiving various and conflicting answers. But, as soon as it became manifest that Sandy particularly wanted information concerning Ned, he was absolutely overwhelmed with evidence. Considering the confusion that reigned at the moment the police fired, it was marvellous how many had seen Ned fall, and how many more were able to give an exact description of his injuries. The accounts, however, differed materially. After some hesitation, he started at a brisk pace for Arraghlow. Something definite must surely be known there, and, whether or no, he might be able in some way to aid and comfort Mrs. Blake.

But as he drew near to Arraghlow alarming symptoms of agitation began to manifest themselves. "It would be downright awfu'," he said to himself, with something like a gasp, "if Mrs. Blake was to drop in my airms wi' a skreigh. I'm no very sure but I might skreigh mysel'."

While he was still engaged in silent soliloquy, he pulled himself up at the little gate of Arraghlow with a jerk. He



stood for an instant, as though not yet quite resolved to pay his visit ; then slipped up the grassy edge of the walk, and knocked timidly on the door. There was no response.

" Maybe she's dead," he thought, in sudden panic, and a desperate impulse to turn and run came over him ; but, mastering it, he repeated his summons, this time a trifle louder. Almost immediately the door opened, and Aileen McCarthy stood before him. Had he been confronted by Mrs. Blake's ghost, Sandy could scarcely have been more startled: He drew back, staring at her for a moment ; then bent forward, with that elaborate bow of his.

" What unexpected pleasure," he faltered, unable to think of anything more appropriate. " Is she very bad ?" he whispered then. " I hope it's no killin' her a'thegither."

" She feels it sorely," answered Aileen, quietly ; " but come inside and see her."

Sandy hastily thrust his hat under his arm, and stepped across the threshold.

" You have my deepest sympathy, Mrs. Blake, mem," he called out some seconds before he set eyes on the widow. " I'm sure I canna tell ye how sorry I am."

" Thank ye sor," returned Mrs. Blake, tremulously, though Sandy was rather surprised to hear her speak at all. " It's a sore, sore blow, comin' wid all the rest."

" That it is, mem, to be sure," said Sandy, seating himself on the extreme edge of a chair, so that it threw up its heels like a frisky horse, and sent him almost into the widow's lap. " Hech, hech, dear me," he exclaimed, picking himself up, " dod, I was near on my nose !"

Aileen placed him another chair, on which he sat with more caution and precision.

The next two minutes were devoted to mopping his face with his ample handkerchief, for what with natural embarrassment and the behavior of tricky chairs he was in a fearful perspiration.

" It's a sair, sair business," he said, when the operation

was finished. "I canna express how I feel for you, mem."

"I'm sure you do, Misther McTear," responded the widow, bursting into tears. "I'm very sure ye 'do," and she sobbed more convulsively still.

Sandy looked at her for a while in blank stupefaction.

"Dinna be greetin', Mrs. Blake," he blurted out at length, feeling he must really say something. "Dinna be makin' yersel sick greetin', for things are maybe no sae bad's ye think."

"Perhaps you can tell us something," cried the widow, catching at his words, and suspending her weeping.

"I—I'm afraid—that is, I'm completely—no, mem, I canna," he ended abruptly.

The widow fell back with a low moan.

"I thought you might perhaps know something," she said brokenly.

For the first time in his life, Sandy was sorry he had not told a lie.

"My pore boy," moaned Mrs. Blake, "they have shot him an' taken him to jail ; that I know, for Patsy Cooney came runnin' to tell me, but more I don't know. He may be dead this minute ; an' if he is, I wisht I was wid him."

"Hoot, toot ; ye maunna be sayin' the like o' that," said Sandy, in gentle reproof, "and gie owre sabbin' too, for ye'll jist mak yersel bad and him nane the better. Sabbin' ne'er keepit a wrinkle oot o' a broo, or a nail oot o' a coffin in this world," he declared. "Keep up your heart, Mrs. Blake. I'll warrant Ned's no dead, nor maybe muckle hurt."

Aileen rose to her feet.

"Since none of us can do anything better than sit and guess, I'll go and find out how he is," she said, with calm determination.

"An' I'll go, too," cried Sandy, springing to his feet. "Yes, I'll go too. It might be awkward for Miss McCarthy to go alone, an' we'll ken a' that's to be kenned."

We'll see Ned, mem," addressing Mrs. Blake, "an' bring ye full word how he is, and a' that's happened till him, and naebody kens but we might hae him back wi us."

They stepped to the door together, but obeying a feminine impulse, Aileen turned back, kissed the widow, and spoke some words of encouragement to her.

"An' that was weel done, Miss McCarthy," said Sandy approvingly, when they were on the road. "Puir body, she needs some heart put into her."

The sun was already low in the west, and the sky in that quarter was like a flaming lake. The mountain tops were still brilliantly ablaze, but their bases were darkling in shadow, and the woods stood sombrely waiting for the angel of the twilight. The world would presently be asleep.

When Sandy and Aileen reached the police barrack in Dunbriggan, they were acutely disappointed to find that the Sub-Inspector was not there, and that the sergeant in charge would not assume the responsibility of letting them see Ned. Nor could he say anything definite as to his wounds.

"What's to be done now?" asked Sandy, turning a woe-begone face on Aileen.

"We must find the Sub-Inspector," she answered promptly, "and get permission to see Ned. Where does he live?" she asked then, addressing the sergeant.

"He doesn't live far off," answered the sergeant, "but I'm afraid you can't see him."

"Oh, we must see him," cried Aileen. "We have come for Mrs. Blake, and it would positively kill her if we were to go back without seeing her son. I think the Sub-Inspector would admit us if we saw him."

Something in her tone or manner touched the sergeant.

"If you must see him, then you must, I suppose," he answered with a smile; "though it's rather against the rules in a case of this kind to grant such requests as yours."

However, I will send a constable with you to show you the way, and you can try the Sub-Inspector yourself." Turning back into the barrack, he called "Dugan, Dugan," till the whole house rang.

Presently Dugan, materialized in the shape of a stalwart youth of some six feet six, more or less.

"Take this man and young lady to the Sub-Inspector's lodgings," said the sergeant to him. "They want to see him on important business."

But when they got to his lodgings, they were informed that the Sub-Inspector had just driven off on a car.

"Do you know where he has gone," asked Aileen of the servant, trembling in spite of herself.

"To Kilgroom Castle, I think," answered the girl.

"Kilgroom Castle," she said. "That's two miles, at least, and it's getting dark already. But we must find him. Thank you," she gratefully said to the constable; and the young man saluted and went his way, sorry, on the whole, that he had to go so soon.

Sandy and Aileen did not indulge in much conversation on the way to Kilgroom, for the pace at which they went left neither of them any surplus of breath. It was not till they were close upon the porter's lodge at the head of the avenue that there was any considerable talk between them, and even then only because it seemed necessary. In view of his relations to Colonel Croker, Aileen thought that possibly Sandy might not wish to be seen taking any active interest in Ned Blake, and so she suggested he should not accompany her to the Castle.

"Not go to the Castle wi' ye," responded Sandy, "an' what for no?"

"It might do you no good, you know," said Aileen, "and one can see the Sub-Inspector just as well as two."

"Mightn't do me good!" repeated Sandy with, for him, very marked scorn. "And I'd like to ken what it maitters whether it'll do me good or ill. If ye mean that I might

be turned oot o' the gairden, I have only to say that it's no' the gairden o' Eden as far as I have been able to discover, and that if I get my marching orders I'll no' leave my airms ahint me. Yes, to be sure, I'll go to the Castle wi' ye."

Aileen said no more, and they walked on to the lodge in silence.

"Oh, by-the-bye," said Sandy, hitting upon a happy idea, "when Barney comes out to open the gate till us, I'll find out whether or no' our man's at the Castle."

Accordingly, when Barney appeared in response to their knocking, Sandy began adroitly to pump him.

"Weel, Barney, my man," he said in his lightest vein, "ye'll hae nothing to do but squat on your hunkers now the Colonel's awa. I shouldna' wonder now if ye hadna been fashed wi' a living cretur' this day. I shrewdly guess ye havena. Eh, you're a lucky dog."

"Faix, an' ye wouldn't do to guess the Sphinx's riddle, Misther McTear," answered Barney. "The drivin' an' ridin' an' gallopin' an' botheration has just clane doubled since the Colonel went away. Misther Wheelan's the gintleman to kape things movin'. I'm not down when, bedad, I'm up again. Them gates 'll be wore off the hinges purty soon; that's what they'll be."

"Ay?" said Sandy, appearing much surprised at this, "And do they trouble ye like that. I widna hae thocht it. But they surely gie ye the Sawbath to yersel, any way."

"Troth thin, an' they don't!" returned Barney, waxing eager to vent his wrongs now that he had got a sympathetic ear. "Widin this last hour three horsemen an' two kyars an' a waginet has gone through them gates. Misther Buckingham was the last av them, an', be the powers! ye'd think it was the Commander-in-chafe hissilf."

Barney had been a soldier and could hardly speak a sentence without some allusion to the army.

"You're keepit gey busy Barney," said Sandy sympathetically ; " but dootless you're weel minded wi' the coin. A greased palm makes willing feet, ye ken."

"Faix, Mither McTear, if you dined only when my palm's greased, ye'd make a mighty light corpse when ye doied," answered Barney.

"Dear me, d'ye tell me that, now!" said Sandy in great astonishment. "Weel, weel," he added, recovering himself, "we can only warstle on and do the best we can. Good-bye, Barney."

"He's there," said Sandy, overtaking Aileen, who had walked on slowly while the two men were talking. "He's there ; we're all right, this time."

The girl fairly trembled with eagerness. "I'm glad," she said. "I hope he'll not refuse us permission to see Ned."

"You go on straight to the big door," said Sandy stopping. "And I'll strike out through this bit wood and come in by the back door, and find out what's going on there. I'll be waiting for you as soon's you're ready ; and there's no' a minute to lose."

With that he struck into a narrow path among the trees, and in a minute was out of sight.

Aileen went on with a palpitating heart.

For the first time the strangeness of her mission began to oppress her. What would be thought of her conduct ? Would it be thought immodest and unmaidenly ? And what was she that she should come to Kilgroom, and on such an errand ?

Lights were springing up within, brilliant lights that struck a fresh awe into her simple peasant heart. What would any one who lived and moved amid such unimaginable splendor, care for her or for those in whom she was interested ? She had a sickening realization of insignificance.

Presently she found herself at the bottom of the flight of stone steps leading up to the great door. She put her foot on the lowest step, but her limbs trembled so much that she had to pause for a moment to recover herself. Then she ran up with a rush, as though doubting her own resolution, and pulled quickly at the bell-knob. She could hear the resounding clang far away in the recesses within : then all was still. She was about to pull again, when, suddenly, without noise or warning, the door swung back, and an apparition in white cap and apron stood looking down on her. Aileen asked if Sub-Inspector Buckingham were within, and the servant curtly answered in the affirmative.

" Can I see him ? " said Aileen, in a tone which seemed to say, " do help me, if you can ! "

The servant declined to say whether she could or not ; but consented to carry in her name. Presently she returned.

" This way," she said, loftily, and Aileen followed her into the dazzling interior. A door was opened and closed, something said as in a dream, and Aileen found herself in a small, dimly-lighted room.

She had not been seated many minutes when she heard sounds of boisterous laughter, coming from an adjoining apartment. She was forced to listen. Some one was talking in loud, bantering tones, and was frequently interrupted by loud guffaws.

" Found out, Buckingham, found out ! " she heard the man say. " I thought you were a better manager than to let your wenches follow you in this way." The pleasantry was greeted with a roar of laughter ; and Aileen shrank as if an arrow had struck her. Her cheeks tingled with shame, and she could have fled from the room.

" We must see this beauty," cried another. " We must see what sort of taste Buckingham has."

"Bring her in, bring her in," cried several more in chorus.

Aileen heard the tinkle of a bell ; and a moment later the servant who had admitted her entered the room.

"This way," she said with a smirk of contempt on her face, "the gentleman wishes to see you in the dining-room."

When Aileen got to the dining-room, she found there a blinding blaze of light, and about a dozen men sitting round a big table with glasses before them. She curtsied awkwardly, and looked appealingly at the Sub-Inspector. He rose and came towards her.

"You wish to see me ?" he said.

"If you please, sir," answered Aileen.

And while she was explaining her business to him, she could hear the critical remarks of the men at the table.

"Not bad for Buck," whispered one.

"D—d good-looking," replied his neighbor.

"Come this way," said the Sub-Inspector kindly, leading the way back to the room she had just left. "I will write you an order there. These gentlemen are a little jocular," he said apologetically when they were alone ; "but they mean no disrespect. They have simply dined well. That is all."

He gave her the order, and opened the outer door for her himself. She went down the steps and into the darkness, feeling, as she had never felt before, and with difficulty keeping herself from falling. She had not gone fifty yards when Sandy met her.

"Hae ye gotten it ?" he asked eagerly.

"Oh, Mr. McTear, give me your arm ! I'm so faint," she answered.

"God bless me !" ejaculated Sandy, supporting the shaking girl. "You're tremmlin' like a leaf in the wind."



## CHAPTER XI.

AILEEN's feeling of faintness lasted but a minute. The cool night air, the tender commonplaces of Sandy, and, above all, the fact that her errand, with all its terrors and humiliations, was a success, speedily restored her. Then there was but one thought in her mind—to get to Ned as fast as might be, and hear from his own lips the story of all that had happened. She pushed forward at a pace that made Sandy pant and blow considerably, though he was strenuous in his efforts to appear at ease. Presently the lights of Dunbriggan were visible, and, soon after, the two were entering the town. Groups of people still hung about, and strong bodies of police were patrolling the roads and streets, dispersing these groups when they seemed to stand too long, or to be too earnestly engaged in conversation. The people thus intruded upon would walk away sulkily, muttering to themselves, and, not infrequently, threats and curses fell on the ear. Sandy and Aileen held steadily and swiftly on, however, too eager on their own mission to take more than a passing notice of these things. But, half-way along the street, they drew up with something of a nervous shock, as a tall, black figure stopped them, with the question: "Are ye goin' to Ned?"

"Yes," answered Aileen, after a moment's pause, recognizing the man's voice. "We have got an order from the Sub-Inspector to see him."

"Good," whispered the man, "I thought ye might be goin' when I seen ye."

He peered cautiously into the darkness, to assure himself that no one was listening.

"Will ye never be spakin' of what I'm goin' to say to ye?" he demanded, then, coming a little closer. "Never, till yer dyin' day?"

"That's a big thing to ask," answered Aileen, in an undertone.

"Not too much, if you knowed all," said the man. "Be quick, 'yes' or 'no'. Them peelers are prowlin' about like hungry jackals, an' faix, we might find ourselves in jail."

Again he peered about, and bent his ear to hearken.

"Are ye goin' to promise," he asked, a second time.

"'Yes' or 'no'; quick!"

"Yes, yes," answered Sandy, promptly. "I'll go bail never a word 'll be spoken."

But, ere the man could divulge his secret, the military tread of half-a-dozen constables fell on his ear.

"Curse them, thin; they're on us," he muttered, slipping away, silently and quickly, into the darkness.

Sandy and Aileen, greatly puzzled, resumed their walk.

"Good-night," said one of the patrol, looking closely at them.

"Good-night," answered Sandy, blithely, and the patrol passed on.

"Very little would make them run a body in, the night," remarked Sandy. "That fellow spoke in an unco suspicious kind o' way."

"I wonder what Pat meant," said Aileen. "I hope there's to be no more disturbance. It makes me shiver to think of what might happen."

Sandy did not answer, for just then they reached the barracks.

The sergeant received them with much deference this time, and immediately led the way to Ned's cell.

Aileen followed closely, giddy with agitation, but Sandy held back.

"I'll let them hae a confab by themselves," he thought, considerably, turning and strolling along the street.

Ned started up with an angry scowl, when he heard his door open, but, when he saw Aileen, he stared in blank astonishment, as though he doubted the evidence of his senses.

"Aileen," he said, at length, "how did *you* manage to get in?"

"I got an order from the Sub-Inspector," she answered, sinking on the edge of the bed, beside him.

She was trembling violently; all her nervous force seemed to have left her within the past hour or two.

"Aileen, what makes you shake like that, darlint?" asked Ned, taking her hand.

"Oh, Ned, Ned; it's all so dreadful!" she cried, hiding her face on his breast, for the sergeant had, by this time, retired. "It's so dreadful, and I—I was a little frightened."

But she nerved herself up, feeling a trifle ashamed of her weakness.

"Are you very much hurt, Ned?" she asked, looking eagerly in his face; "tell me, are you much hurt?"

"Not so bad's I might be, but that's not their fault," he answered with a kindling eye. "They would be better plaised if I was shot through the head, instead of the hip; but never you mind; the thing's not done yet—no, not, by a long way."

There was more ferocity in the tone than in the words, and in the face than in either. Aileen had never seen that lurid expression in it before, and she was as much frightened as though her lover had undergone some malign transformation. Perhaps, indeed, he had.

"Don't be speaking like that, Ned," she implored, laying her hand on his arm. "It'll only hurt yourself."

"It's aisy prachin' Aileen," he responded. "But think what's been done to me this day, when I had done nothin' to

deserve it. An'think, too, what maybe done to them that's dear to me afore I get out of this hole, and then tell me if I have raison to be angry or not. If they keep me here and turn my mother out, I'll—but never mind, Aileen, "he added, with lately developed caution. "This isn't the place to be talkin' of them things; there are too many ears about. How is my mother, Aileen? Does she know I'm in jail?"

"She does," answered Aileen, "and it was from her I came to see how you were, and you haven't told me yet."

"I'm shot in the hip," he answered. "The doctor has been in, and said it was only a flesh wound, and that it would soon hale, which is a good thing for a man that has a good dale afore him. Aileen, how did you come to get an order from the Sub-Inspector? What was the order for?"

He asked this quickly, as if suspecting another wrong.

She told her story.

"Did ye see Wheelan?" he asked, when she had concluded.

"I did," replied Aileen.

"Aileen," said Ned, and his voice became low and tense, "that man's the cause of all the throuble. If he does anything more to me or mine—you know what I mane—I'll kill him. I'll kill him," he repeated, as though the very sound of the words were agreeable to him. "An' I don't care what happens."

"Ned, dear Ned," said the girl with a stifled cry, drawing closer to him, "you do not mean what you say. I know you don't."

"But I do," he declared, ferociously. "You don't know me, Aileen. I'll kill him."

"And you don't care any more for me then?" she said, her lips all aquiver, and the tears coming into her eyes.

He looked at her with a wistful, softened expression.

"Oh, Aileen," he said, clasping her in a passionate em-

brace, "that's the thought that I can't stand. That's what kills me."

"That you don't care for me?" she said, looking up at him, and smiling through her tears.

"Don't be sayin' them words," he returned, "You know better than that. It's the thought of you, an' all that's goin' to take place that drives me mad. When I go out of this I don't know how things 'll be. Likely I'll be a beggar, widout house or home to take you or anybody else to—and if I am—but there's no use spakin' to frighten you, Aileen."

Aileen sat silent for a minute, toying with a button on Ned's coat. She hardly heard his last words; she was busy with thoughts of her own.

"I am going to ask you something, Ned," she said at length; then she stopped as if words failed her.

"What is it," he asked.

She gave the button a great pull, as though she wanted to tear it off.

"If you were to lose Arraghlow that you'd come to Ferndyke," she said.

She continued playing with the button, never once raising her eyes to his.

Ned took her hand and pressed it between his two palms, and a faint smile came into her face. He was to consent; she knew he would.

"You are very good, but that cannot be, Aileen," he said, slowly.

The girl's face fell. She ceased toying with the button, and looked in his eyes, her disappointment keenly expressed in every lineament.

"That would be lettin' them take what isn't theirs, widout a word about it," he explained.

"You know the law helps them, Ned," she pleaded, "and you couldn't——"

"Yes," he said, bitterly interrupting her. "I know the

law helps them, an' I know they take what they have no right to take ; but if I'm out they'll not get Arraghlow without knowin' more about it, and if they take it when I'm in here—but that is not to be talked about, only that me an' them 'll get even."

"Would you like to see Sandy McTear ?" she asked quietly. "I'm sure he would like to see you."

"Yes, I'd like to see the ould man," answered Ned. "But first tell me, Aileen," he said, lowering his voice to a whisper, "did you see any of the boys about when you were comin' along ?"

It immediately occurred to Aileen that Ned's question had some connection with the interruption in the street, and without directly answering him, she told him of the incident.

He listened to her intently ; when she finished he was visibly disappointed.

"They can't do it, I suppose," he said ; and then, as if some explanation were needed, he added, "Pat O'Shea proposed afore the meetin' that if the p'lice took any one the rest should rescue him. He said he had seen it often done in America, but maybe its easier there than here. That's the manin' of my question, Aileen. An' now ye may bring in ould Sandy, if he's not afraid."

When Sandy appeared, led by a constable, he had that aspect of bluff jocularly which he was in the habit of affecting when his feelings were in danger.

"A pretty sicht," he said, as soon as he appeared at the door, "you're a braw pair, I must say, taking to such holes and corners as this for your courtin'. Weel, Ned, my man, and how d'ye feel yourself ?"

Ned could hardly help laughing. He was very angry or depressed indeed, when the old man's eccentricities did not amuse him.

"Oh, purty comfortable, Misther McTear," he answered.

"I've got free quarters here, ye see, an' lots av people to attend on me, as if I was me lord."

"Ye'll never mend, Ned, my man, till you're happit in the grund," said Sandy, in reproof of this levity. "I'm no against an orra joke, now and again, mysel', but you're never done joking. I aye said—but never mind that. And now the best thing we can do is to hurry off and tell her that's waiting how weel we found you."

With that he shook hands with Ned in a jaunty fashion, turned, and strode buoyantly away.

Aileen, however, lingered. Ned, after regarding her mutely for a moment, with singular and thrilling sensations, stretched out his hand and drew her towards him.

"Aileen," he said passionately, taking her in his arms.

She made no reply, only her head fell on his breast, and the tears she had repressed gushed freely.

"I think," whispered Ned, after a considerable pause, "that if you an' me was away in America, or somewhere, we could be happy yet."

Instantly the girl was eager and alert. "Yes," she said, quickly, catching at this hope, "keep that before you. Oh, Ned, dear, do, and don't think any more of the things you have been saying. I would go with you willing, and you don't know how much I could help you; and in America where people are free, and those who work are well paid, we should soon be happy and prosperous, and you'd forget all about these troubles."

Ned was surprised at the girl's passionate pleading, and looked at her with a sort of pity. He still loved Aileen; no man could love a woman more, but there were other feelings in his breast now. Virulent feelings that seemed to push all else aside, and which he could not help obeying. No, he could not go to America even with her, and leave his enemy triumphing.

"Aileen," he said, with a note of anguish, "I am sorry I said that, for you build too much on it. Misther Wheelan

an' me *must* be even. But I'll tell you what, Aileen, since I have got into all this mortal trouble that maybe I can't get well out of, if you like I'll never again even that you an' me was ever to be married."

The girl rose to her feet stung and despairing. "Oh, Ned!" was all she could say, "oh, Ned!" and then a constable coming to the door, as though he were impatiently awaiting her departure, she turned and walked away, leaving Ned blankly staring.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Blake was doing her best to drag through an eternity of suspense at Arraghlow. Often she started up, fancying she heard footsteps, and sat down again with a keener feeling of despair when she found her mistake. "Why are they not coming?" she asked herself a hundred times. "There must be something very bad, surely, when they're staying so long." It was very lonely sitting among the shadows by herself, and the wind, which had risen, was piping a weird treble among the trees, giving an added dreariness to her desolation. Once when it came in a sudden gust, she sprang up and ran to the door, convinced that she heard some one shrieking for help. But outside there was no voice save the one which made such ghostly music among the tree tops and about the gables.

At last she heard a noise on the gravel walk and got up, to be caught in Aileen's arms.

"Have you been thinking us very, very long?" asked the girl tenderly. "Ned is not much hurt, only a light wound in the hip; he will be well, the doctor says, in a few days, and he'll be out, too, for they have nothing against him."

"Thank God, thank God!" gasped the widow. "It lay on me mind he was dead when ye were so long."

Aileen led Mrs. Blake to a chair, telling her in a few words the cause of the delay.

"Oh, dear me, I just can't tell ye how joyful I am," said



the widow again. "If they only give me back Ned, that's all I care for."

"He'll be back as lively's a young colt, within a week," broke in Sandy, who had been hiding himself among the shadows behind the door. "That will he; and you just keep up your heart, mem: that's the best advice I can gie ye. And now," he added, moving into the light, "as I have some walking to do the night yet, I'll e'en be steppin'. Miss McCarthy has agreed to stop wi'you a' night, and I'll run up to Ferndyke and tell the fowk there what's keeping her."

"Misther McTear, how can I ever thank ye?" said the widow gratefully.

"Just by no tryin'," returned Sandy. "What I'm doing's no worth speaking about; and now, mem, I'll bid ye good-night. Good-night, Miss McCarthy," and he vanished into the darkness.

When he reached Ferndyke, he found Dennis McCarthy on the point of starting with little Kathleen in search of Aileen, being unable to bear the suspense any longer.

"I thought ye might be wearying for her," said Sandy, "and so I have just run up to say that she's bided down bye at Arraghlaw to keep Mrs. Blake company for the night. Ned's met wi' an accident, ye ken—in fact he's *temporarily* in the police barrack at Dunbriggan.

"I knowed it," cried Dennis querulously. "I knowed how it would be. They'll never rest till they take Aileen from me too."

## CHAPTER XII.

MR. WHEELAN had so many matters of moment pressing upon him, that he had comparatively little difficulty in persuading himself it was his bounden duty to refrain from pestering the Colonel with letters until he should have some definite success to report. But at the end of ten days Mr. Wheelan was obliged to confess to himself that little had been accomplished. He felt, too, that he could not longer postpone his letter to the Colonel : further delay, instead of benefiting him, might imperil all his projects. So he sat down to make his report. The letter was in his lightest, brightest vein, full of animation and mild pleasantries ; for Mr. Wheelan had that most formidable of all gifts, the gift of being familiar.

"There," said Mr. Wheelan to himself when he had finished, "if that doesn't keep him off, nothing in this world but death or paralysis will."

Three days later he received an answer. The Colonel expressed pleasure at the confident tone of Mr. Wheelan's letter, notwithstanding the fact that it contained no remittance. He hoped the rents would speedily be forthcoming. The expenses of an establishment in London were very considerable, and could not be met unless those who owed money paid it. Finally he begged to enclose a note addressed to Mrs. Croker, which he had intercepted the day before. It was an unpardonable piece of impertinence in any one to send such a letter and he

hoped Mr. Wheelan would not forget the matter. Mr. Wheelan thinking it very unlikely he should, opened out a crumpled piece of note paper and read as follows :

“ ARRAGHLOW.

“ DEER MISIS CROKER.—I hope you will not take it ill in a pore widow woman that's in mortil trouble to make so bould as rite to your ladyship lestways you was always good to me and that's what gives me heart, and may God bless your ladyship for that same. My son is some behind in his rent, and Misther Wheelan has served us with a paper, and says everything must be paid at onct or he'll take the bit place from us, and I thought maybe your deer, deer ladyship that's so kind to the pore would spake to the kurnil about it for my heart is clane broke and they have put Ned in jail and shot him without any cause only going to the meeting. Perhaps your ladyship knows that before your ladyship was boren my son's grandfather built this house, and my son has done a great great dale to it too and if the Kurnil would lave us as we are till we can pay the rent it would be kindly done. I am all alone except Aileen McCarthy that was with me for a night and I can't work or do nothing I'm that sore put about and hopping your ladyship will live long and die hapie at last.

“ MARTHA BLAKE.”

Mr. Wheelan laid down the soiled piece of paper. “ Beautifully put,” he commented internally. “ I'll remember it, never fear,” and he went on with the reading of his mail.

The next letter he opened bore neither date nor address, but was ornamented with a rude drawing of a death's head and cross-bones above an open coffin. The body contained these significant words.

“ If you evict one of the tenants, you can't say your

prayers too fast, for as sure's you're born you'll be packed in quick lime."

"I expected that long ago," said Mr. Wheelan quietly, for his nerves were good; "things are beginning to get lively."

He took up a sheet of paper and dashed off a note to Sub-Inspector Buckingham.

"DEAR BUCKINGHAM," he wrote, "the enclosed interesting document reached me this morning from some one too modest to sign his name to it. I think, after this, I might be the better for your protection. Will you kindly have the necessary arrangements made for that purpose?"

"Yours in haste,

"PERCY WHEELAN."

Having given this epistle to his henchman, Tim O'Keefe, with strict instructions to deliver it into the Sub-Inspector's own hand, he turned back to his correspondence, ending up by reading the Colonel's letter a second time. When he was certain that he had mastered its contents he lit a cigar and began to smoke, for, like so many of the world's greatest men, Mr. Wheelan was a firm believer in the virtues of tobacco.

"The Colonel wants money," he thought, "a pretty general want, so far as my observation goes." And Mr. Wheelan fell into a deep reverie, from which he was presently roused by a knocking on the door.

"Come in," he called, instinctively laying his hand on his pistol. The spirit of self-preservation was strong within him; for, as he saw himself, things were getting lively. He half-expected to see his visitor or visitors masked, and was relieved not only to find them wearing their natural countenances in the full light of day, but of a submissive propitiatory aspect as well.

"Well," said Mr. Wheelan, looking sharply at three

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men who stood deferentially pulling their forelocks, "what is it?"

"We have comed about the rent, yer honor," answered one, giving his mane another tug and advancing a step.

"And what about the rent," demanded Mr. Wheelan, "Have you come to pay it?"

"We comed to see if yer honor 'ud be so kind—"

"As to give you a clear receipt and thank you for the favor of taking it," interrupted Mr. Wheelan.

"I have heerd av yer honor's good-natir an' good-humor," responded the man, with a bland smile, "an' now I see it."

"See what?" said Mr. Wheelan brusquely.

"Faix, yer honor's jocularity," returned the man.

"Every man knows yer honor's dead gone on jokin'."

"It might suit you better, my friend, to be less familiar," said Mr. Wheelan, with a withering look. "Your 'jocularity' as you call it, strikes me as being slightly inappropriate just now."

The two men who had hitherto remained modestly in the rear crept up and scowled in the face of their spokesman, as though to say, "there, you've gone and done it now, you blatherin' gossoon."

The criminal at once assumed a meek and lugubrious expression which, indeed, was no difficult process, for his heart was far from being light.

"I didn't mane to be 'proprate,' yer honor," he said; "but me an' them," indicating his companions with an inclination of the head, "has come to see if yer honor 'ud be so kind as to take back the writ an' take the rint."

Mr. Wheelan's eyes slightly dilated and glistened.

So the enemy was capitulating. Natural, very natural. Was he not opposed by Percy Wheelan?

"With all expenses," he answered.

The three men changed, simultaneously, and with an equal expression of discomfort, from one foot to the other.

"An' what 'ud the 'spenses be, yer honor?" asked the spokesman with a deepened expression of solemnity.

"Oh, about 50 per cent. of the rent."

The men looked at each other in a questioning, unintelligent way.

"Is that much, yer honor?" ventured the spokesman, after a considerable pause.

"Half as much more as the rent," answered Mr. Wheelan.

"Howly Moses!" ejaculated one of the two that had been silent so far. "Didn't I tell ye, Barney, that them lawyers 'ud be afther fixin' us?"

"I'll have no disputes here," interpolated Mr. Wheelan severely. "If you want to quarrel, you must go outside."

"D'ye hear that what his honor says?" demanded Barney turning upon his weak-minded friend with a fierce look. "Half as much more's a great dale, yer honor," turning to Mr. Wheelan with a becoming humility of tone. "It's mighty hard up we are, every wan av us. Indade it is, yer honor."

"You have only yourselves to blame then," answered Mr. Wheelan curtly. "If you wont pay your just debts till they're nearly doubled with law costs, you needn't expect anything else than to be hard up."

"I knowed it," broke out the recalcitrant Micky again, "I tould ye how it 'ud be."

Here was an opportunity to impart a little moral instruction, which Mr. Wheelan, as a Christian, could not let slip.

"Upon my soul, you're a pretty set of people," he said, leaning forward in an admonitory attitude; "A most interesting and instructive study. You go to work in a spirit of sheer cussedness and defy me and the law and everybody else on the side of right and order, keeping his own from Colonel Croker and heaping up costs, as if money were no object to you, and then, at the eleventh hour, when all the mischief is donê, you come here and

expect me to pay the piper for you, for that's what it amounts to ; the lawyers won't lie out of their money. Now don't you think you're a nice set ? ”

His visitors were silent in visible abasement.

“ Well, well,” continued Mr. Wheelan impatiently “ what about the rent ? ”

“ Faix, there's a heap av trouble about it, yer honor,” answered Barney, “ an' it's mortal glad we'd be if yer honor 'ud take the howl rint an' half the costs.”

“ I'll take the rent and forty per cent of costs, till we see,” answered Mr. Wheelan. “ If you like those terms, pay; if not, I have no more to say to you.”

“ Faix we'll pay, yer honor,” exclaimed Micky, and thrusting his hand into a pocket for money. “ If them lawyers had it any longer the costs 'ud be the big thing an' the rint the little thing.” Barney looked at Micky for a second, with an expression of deep disgust, then he began to pull out his cash ; the third man following his example. When they were outside again, however, Barney gave Micky a bit of his mind.

“ What are ye after making a fool av yourself for, Micky ? ” he demanded. “ Bad cess to ye for a senseless gossoon ; if ye had just hoult yer pace we'd have got off wid half the costs. What did ye agree to let me do all the spakin' for if you was goin' to be puttin' yer foot in it.”

Meanwhile Mr. Wheelan was sitting in his office as elated as Napoleon debating terms of peace. He understood the temper of the Irish peasantry thoroughly, and he knew that the landlord had still a firmer hold on them than the political reformer.

“ I have conquered,” he smiled complacently. “ I may set my house in order to receive more of them.” Nor was he mistaken. It was not long ere two more presented themselves, to go through the same performance as the previous three, and throughout the day others came dropping in till at five o'clock in the evening half the rents had

been paid, with all the costs. The combination had broken down completely, and once more Mr. Wheelan was master of the situation.

To use a gambling illustration, he had but a single card in his hand. The card was not one of much value, but he had played it smilingly, and it had won him the game. When he found his opponents obstinate he simply gave Tim O'Keefe £5, and told him in confidence that he wished the report spread that the tenants were coming in secretly to pay their rents ; and Tim's ingenuity had done the rest. The ruse was not original, but the Kilgroom tenants fell easy victims, and, mistrusting one another, hastened in—such of them as were able to pay—as we have seen.

On the evening of the fourth day he had 75 per cent. of all that was owing. Then, concluding that he had taken nearly all the money on the estate, he sat down to write to the Colonel.

"You will see by the enclosed remittance," he wrote, "that our friends have got over the holidays and are back to business. The combination has completely broken down, as I expected it should. It has been a case of unconditional surrender. As to the enclosure you sent me, it is very pathetic. Of course you do not expect the literal truth in a composition of this kind, and the widow takes the usual liberty with facts. She forgets to say that her son, from a sheer love of disturbance, knocked a policeman down at the meeting on that Sunday ; that he and some others attacked Sub-Inspector Buckingham, and wrested his sword from him and trampled it under foot ; and, finally, that he engaged with other choice spirits in a vigorous bout of stone-throwing. These trifles the writer omits to mention. The plain fact is that Blake is anything but a desirable tenant, and nothing that I have seen would lead me to counsel further leniency. . . . The other morning I had one of those inspiring missives which are



so considerable a source of revenue to the Post Office at present. It was neatly adorned with a death's head, cross-bones and a coffin. I think, Colonel, valuable lives are safest out of this country just now."

"There," said Mr. Wheelan, folding up the letter, "fortune favors the brave, and a stout heart treads to victory."

## CHAPTER XIII.

THOSE who expected Mr. Wheelan to pounce on the defaulting tenants at the very earliest opportunity were disappointed. Day after day the doomed tenants lay in their fortified houses in readiness for the attack, and night after night they still found themselves in undisturbed possession. But one morning, while the sun was a little above the horizon the chapel bell was clamoring wildly as if to summon the clans to battle, and from every conspicuous height in the neighborhood horns were sounding lustily. At the same time mounted messengers were galloping from point to point, the foam that lathered their horses' flanks being evidence of the urgency of their errands, while the sentinels who had lain on the hill-tops for several days previous came down in great haste and excitement to warn all and sundry of the appearance of police scouts.

It was known, too, that grim preparations were going on at the police-barrack. Sub-Inspector Buckingham, in sword and regimentals, had been seen walking thither with a purposeful step at daybreak. Men were occasionally observed flitting about the building with every appearance of being seriously engaged, and the faces of the patrolling parties in the streets had the expression of men who have more on their minds than the duty immediately in hand.

The commotion which had been every minute increasing since the first peal of the bell rose to the wildest pitch on the arrival of the first train, for it brought in a strong

contingent of police and also a company of men of very ill omen whenever they appear, men who somehow remind one of convicts being driven to labor—Emergency men. These were big brawny fellows. Sodden and brutish of countenance ferociously insolent in manner, and gaining an added truculency of aspect from the heavy revolvers which gleamed significantly in their belts. Jeers, groans, and shouts of execration greeted them, but these they little heeded, being manifestly well accustomed to such modes of reception.

They had with them a carload of implements : crow-bars—fresh from the anvil—ladders, sledge-hammers, battering-rams and other such tools of law and civilization ; and while these things were being put into carts, the constables had twice to drive back the crowd. When at length the carts were laden, the police formed a hollow square, with the emergency men, the bailiffs, the sub-sheriff, and their belongings, in the centre, and a start was made for the barrack. As the word of command rang out, such a volley of execration as only Celtic ingenuity can compass, broke from the crowd, and the tumultuous noise was kept up along the street, till suddenly the cry ran that a special train had just come in, bringing a battalion of red-coats. The crowd wheeled just in time to see the soldiers debouching upon an open space in front of the station, where they quickly formed up and stood to their arms. A few minutes later the whole body of local and foreign police came marching from the barrack with Colonel Tomkins and Harold Wentworth, the resident magistrate, riding at its head. As it drew near, the soldiers got the word of command, and stepped briskly out in front.

Then there was a terrific yell and a rush, as the people with one impulse ran forward to get ahead of the military, many of them leaping the fences and taking to the fields.

All the while the bell was pealing its utmost, and the horns were blowing.

Mr. Wentworth, disturbed by the clamor, declared that the bell being tolled for an illegal purpose, must stop, and ordered half a dozen of his men to go and silence it by force. But scarcely had the order left his lips when a vehement cry of "the bell, the bell, the chapel bell," ran along the dense line of people, and immediately there was a desperate race for the chapel gate. The constables who had been told to silence the bell pushed bravely on; but, as there was little disposition on the part of the crowd to make way for them, their progress was naturally slow. On the other hand, a tall figure in priestly garb, who had started at the same time, glided easily among the pliant, dividing mass, and speedily outran the emissaries of the law.

"Shut the gate, boys," he shouted lustily, as though he wished every one to hear, "shut the gate, and let them open it if they dare," and in a trice the heavy iron gate was secured with chain and bolt.

"That's right," said Father O'Halloran, coming up breathlessly, "let them touch it now." Then he folded his arms composedly, and awaited the coming of Mr. Wentworth.

"I'll batter down that gate," cried that worthy, while he was still some distance off.

"You will do so at your peril then, Mr. Wentworth," answered Father O'Halloran, firmly.

"At my peril, indeed," retorted the magistrate, with a crimson face, "at my peril, indeed. Are you aware, sir, that I am an officer of the law. That bell, I say, must stop."

"That bell shall ring, Mr. Wentworth, just as long as the people whose property it is wish it to ring," said Father O'Halloran, with unruffled calmness. "Neither you nor those who employ you have any right to interfere with it."

"Good God, there's a doctrine for you!" cried the magistrate, turning to Colonel Tomkins. "The state or its officers have no right to interfere with a seditious papist bell. Then, sir, you defy me?" turning back to the priest.

"You can so construe it if you please," replied Father O'Halloran. "Boys, pull away," he called out; "keep it going."

This was like a spark of fire to a powder magazine. The magistrate was beside himself with fury.

"You are a black, traitorous rascal," he roared. "But I'm d——d if you'll carry it this time. I have force enough at my back not only to smash that gate and pull down that treasonous bell, but to level your chapel as well. Do you hear?"

"I hear, Mr. Wentworth," answered the priest, drawing himself up and casting an eye on the ranks of armed men about, "and must admit that your force is very formidable indeed. You have many stout arms, a forest of guns and bayonets and some bushels of bullets, all capable of doing sore execution on your enemies, but all these should not serve you if you so much as attempt to carry out your threat."

"And do you presume to threaten?" demanded the magistrate, digging his horse's sides in his passion, so that it floundered about and maimed a policeman.

"I threaten nothing," answered the priest, "though the temptation to imitate your worship is very considerable. I only bid you beware of doing that compared with which the taking of life might seem trivial."

The magistrate suddenly cooled down, and seemed to consider a moment; then he turned to Colonel Tomkins, and the two held a whispered consultation.

"If we do not stay to wrangle with you now," said the magistrate, turning back to Father O'Halloran, "this shall not be forgotten," and he gave the word to the force to move on.

"I know, Mr. Wentworth, you have a good memory for such incidents as this," replied the priest, with a slight, ironical bow, "and that I may safely reckon on being remembered." Then looking through the bars of the gate he called, "keep the bell going, boys."

At these words a shout of triumph rose from the multitude, which was followed by howls of derision all along the line of march.

A short distance from the cabin which had been singled out for the first attack, Mr. Wheelan, with an escort of police, joined the Sub-Sheriff and his forces. The troops were halted, and a short consultation held, then the sub-sheriff and the bailiffs advanced to the hut and formally demanded possession. This being peremptorily refused, the troops were brought up and disposed in two rings about the cabin, the police forming the inner ring, and the red-coats the outer; the sheriff's assistants being, of course, in the centre.

The cloud of lime and dust which presently rose told the multitude outside that operations had begun, and the signal was greeted with a long-continued storm of howling and hooting and groaning, and a surging movement that was only checked by the bristle of bayonets when it threatened to go too far.

At last a deep, wide breach was made in the wall, and the crowbars were laid aside. Then the sub-sheriff advanced with one or two of his chosen men to enter through the hole, but no sooner did they show their faces than they recoiled in panic from a boiling waterspout.

A bailiff, presumably new to the work, judging from his heroic disregard of self, leaped in, and the next moment came out head-foremost, knocking over the second in the brilliant attack. Then there ensued a desperate struggle about the opening. The besieging force, though superior in numbers, was hardly gaining way. One man got his foot inside, and bade fair to get his body in as well, but

he was pushed back despite his own efforts and the gallant support he received. Then two men threw themselves into the hole, shouldered vigorously by their comrades behind, but they, too, retreated rather precipitately, and the next moment a stout wooden beam was seen playing back and forth in the opening, like a weaver's shuttle. Cheer upon cheer from the crowd outside rent the air.

"Give it to them, Pat," it shrieked. "Give it to them, me boy. Hooray."

But scaling ladders, are brought and in an instant half a dozen men are up, tearing off the roof, while others again attempt the breach in the wall. A minute more and those on the roof are inside in spite of pitchforks and boiling water. Then there comes out a piercing shriek of "murder," and three or four constables rush forward with fixed bayonets charging right into the house. In a trice two men—one old, the other young—are dragged out, knocked down and hand-cuffed; then follows a woman, her hair dishevelled and her face bleeding, and last of all come three little girls crying piteously,—and the garrison is taken. The eviction proceeds apace. Sledge-hammers are called into requisition to facilitate the removal of the furniture, and soon the articles come tumbling out one on top of another—broken cupboards, broken crockery, broken chairs and bedsteads, pots, pans, blankets, ragged pieces of clothing, being hurled forth promiscuously. Then the rafters are pulled down, a score or so of grimy men come out of what had so recently been the home of a family, and the eviction is over.

The tools are gathered, the word of command is quickly given, and the forces march away with the hand-cuffed men in the carts, since they will not be obliging enough to walk, leaving the woman and her three crying children to contemplate the ruins of their household goods.

Father O'Halloran ran forward to offer them some comfort, but his voice was so tremulous that he said little.

"Go to my house," he said; "go at once and wait there for my coming," and he hurried after the crowd, which was running with all speed to the cabin which report said was to be next attacked.

The former scene, with slight variations, were again repeated here. The Sub-Sheriff advanced with a great show of courage and demanded possession. That being contemptuously refused, the magistrate advanced and made his little oration, and that too being without effect (if we except a burst of scornful laughter) the crowbar brigade rushed on to their duty. They fought for a full hour ere they gained an entrance: then the police entered with them, made three more prisoners, helped to drag out two women, a boy and a girl, which piece of work being heroically accomplished, the furniture was thrown out, mostly in little bits, the roof demolished, and once more the forces moved triumphantly away amid the hooting of the crowd and the weeping of the women and children.

The next fortress to be stormed showed more of a garrison-like strength than either of the two that had already been taken. To begin with: the house was built of solid stone, was two stories high, and slated on the roof. Then a deep wide moat, which two hundred willing arms had helped to dig and fill with water, encircled it: and, besides all that, a solid wall had been built against the door from behind, and the lower windows were as stoutly barricaded as wood could make them, and the upper windows partially barricaded, so that they could easily be defended; while to give the whole a more independent, defiant air, a green flag, with a suitable motto, floated from a pole on the chimney top.

The Sub-Sheriff stood for a while observing the preparations that had been made for his reception, then advanced to the side of the moat, to see whether it was possible to leap across.

As he was making his calculations a man put his head



out of an upper window and looked at the Sub-Sheriff with a comical expression.

"Pretty well done, ain't it, Mr. Sheriff?" he said pleasantly. "I'll tell you what it is, you'll have to take a mighty good spurt and be pretty spry to clear that ditch. It's about as well engineered as the Suez Canal, ain't it now, Mr. Sheriff?"

The speaker was a young man with a thin, lean face and a rather sallow complexion. His accent was unmistakable American.

"All's ready, Mr. Sheriff, the performance may begin," he went on in his same affable tone. Then, looking away at the multitude, he waved his hat and shouted, "Erin go bragh, and Bunker Hill!"

"Ireland an' Amerikee forever," came back in a deafening shout. "The Aigle and the Shamrock."

While this was going on the Sub-Sheriff retired to consult with Mr. Wheelan and the resident magistrate. After talking together for a little the three men walked forward and made the circuit of the moat.

"It ain't no slouch of a ditch that, gentlemen," remarked the American cheerfully from above. "It's what you might call a nice, tidy bit of work."

The Sub-Sheriff was hot and uncomfortable, for, besides the heightening of temperature that comes of a disagreeable plight, a close and electric day, there was now a boom of thunder along the darkening sky; and the prospect of carrying on the battle in a thunder-storm was scarcely pleasant.

"Come on, my men," he called in a loud voice. "Don't let it be said that a bit of a ditch deterred you. Come, I will go with you myself," and, taking a race and leap, he plunged into the waters of the moat which soused him over the head. A dozen men leaped in after him and were similarly ducked. But, furious because of all these obstacles, they were speedily on their feet clambering up the

inner bank. And then came a scene that made the crowd outside yell and shriek with delight.

No sooner did the first get to his knees on the inner side of the trench than a party of men swept round the end of the house some with poles and some with stout sticks, and in the twinkling of an eye the Sub-Sheriff and his men were floundering in midwater.

"Should think you'd feel mighty comfortable in there this hot day," said the young American, looking down on the Sub-Sheriff. But his attention was quickly diverted.

"Here boys, here," he cried, running about with the agility of a squirrel. "Blame me if they ain't laying planks."

And so it was. A plank had been laid, and already a constable with fixed bayonet was half-way across, but a quick vigorous twist to the bridge and he was in the water with the rest. In falling he lost hold of his gun, which a man with a gaff dexterously ginned out before its owner could recover it. Instantly the American caught it, stuck his hat on the point of the bayonet and waved it to the crowd.

"Bunker Hill!" he cried.

"For Heaven's sake lay aside the weapon," cried Father O'Halloran, who, as parish priest, had been permitted to enter the enclosure. "Do not use it, whatever you do."

"I reckon you're right," replied the American, calmly. "There," he said, turning and handing the gun to another, "hang that trophy on the wall inside."

"Young man," roared Mr. Wentworth strutting forward to the opposite edge, purple with fury. "I take you to be an American from your tongue——"

"Kerrect," replied the American placidly, interrupting him. "Melville Johnson of Chicago, and if ever you're there, look in on the Board of Trade—probably find me in the wheat pit—and we'll have a real British B and S together."

"I must tell you, Mr. Johnson," said Mr. Wentworth loftily, "that I'm the resident magistrate of this district, and while—"

"Glad to make your acquaintance, sir," broke in Mr. Johnson, with a polite bow. "Business pretty brisk these times, ain't it?"

"I was going to observe, sir, when you interrupted me," pursued the magistrate sternly, "that while we have every desire to be on good terms with the United States we cannot allow American citizens to manage our business for us here."

"Well, Mr. Magistrate," answered the American, quite unabashed, "I guess there ain't a particle of use in arguing across this moat—I'm here to see some fun, so if you're ready, come on."

"Very well, Mr. Johnson, very well, sir," said the magistrate trembling with rage, though he strove to appear calm, "Your blood be upon your own head! You have been warned." With which statement he turned on his heel.

"Erin go bragh!" shouted the irreverent Johnson, and the crowd with great zest took up the cry.

Meantime the Sub-Sheriff and his men had been drawn out of the water, and stood on the edge of the moat, dripping and muttering curses. The afternoon was far advanced too, and unless the attack was resumed immediately and vigorously, darkness might find the recalcitrant tenants still in possession. So they again set about laying planks, but no sooner did a man step on one of them than he was neatly tilted into the water from which he had to be rescued by his comrades. Half-an-hour was spent at this entertaining sport without any advantage to the besiegers; then, being maddened beyond all endurance, a batch of emergency men again leaped into the water; and tried desperately to clamber up the opposite bank. But their utmost endeavor was vain, for no sooner did

one of them scramble to his knees than he was pushed back to cool his ardor in the moat. The magistrate once more advanced to the trench, and warned the defenders that if further resistance were made the police should be ordered to charge, let the consequences be what they might. His warning was disregarded, and fifty men were ordered to take the place at the point of the bayonet.

Then ensued a most terrific struggle, the defenders and besiegers using their weapons with all the ferocity of which they were capable though the police, being at a serious disadvantage in the trench, were able to do their opponents comparatively little injury. Seeing that the police were unable to make good a footing on the other side the magistrate ordered about a score more to their assistance, and the additional force began immediately to tell. The attacking party had all but conquered, when its energy was suddenly paralyzed, by a ghastly and unexpected accident. A policeman was struck and killed on the spot by lightning, and his comrades, filled with horror and superstition, fell back in utter confusion.

"A judgment! a judgment!" clamored the crowd.

"Yes, a judgment; heaven is on our side," responded the defenders, driving the constabulary helter-skelter into the water.

During the next ten minutes it is safe to aver that Mr. Melville Johnson was the only perfectly cool man on the ground. He saw that he and his friends, even with the important aid of the moat, could not stand against a strong body of police with guns and bayonets; so, taking advantage of the commotion he managed to get every man of the garrison safely back into the house. With a clear field the besiegers of course flocked over the moat and began the usual operation on the walls; but the crowbars were useless; and it was an hour and a half ere a breach was made with the battering ram. Not even then could an entrance be effected, for the defenders fought desperately,

and, being well armed, were able to keep the bailiffs and emergency men outside, until presently the night fell, and the Sub-Sheriff and his forces were compelled to retire discomfited.

## CHAPTER XIV.

NEVER, in their experience, had Kilgroom and Dunbriggan known such fierce and ungovernable transports of jubilation as on that night. The whole country-side was abroad, young and old, male and female, shouting and singing, quite beside itself with glee. The parading, however, was not wholly for demonstration. Some of the sharper spirits, who believed in combining business with pleasure, kept a keen lookout for Mr. Wheelan and the Sub-Sheriff; and when it transpired that those gentlemen were safe behind the bayonets of the red coats, a vindictive cry of "Kilgroom" was raised.

Father O'Halloran, who had never gone home, fearing what might happen, felt his blood run cold at these cries. Well he knew that a visit of the crowd to Kilgroom Castle at present meant vengeance and destruction, and then retaliation. Rarely had he felt such a weight of responsibility as then; and yet, strain and shout as he would, his efforts were futile.

Throughout the hurrying mass were occasional horsemen, and just as Father O'Halloran, faint and breathless, was about to give up in despair, one of them happened to pass. Father O'Halloran clutched at the stirrup-leather.

"For the love of heaven give me your horse, Pat," he said to the astonished rider.

The man immediately dismounted and helped the priest into the saddle. "Take care av him, yer riverence," he cautioned, "for faix it's thinkin' himself chargin' the Sas-senachs or the Roosians he is."

"I'll take care," answered Father O'Halloran. But whatever Father O'Halloran might be on the platform, or in the pulpit, or squarely on the ground on his two feet, he was a most ridiculous spectacle on horseback. Finding the animal frisky he threw his arms about its neck, letting go the bridle reins and leaving the people in his path to take care of themselves as best they might.

At last Father O'Halloran, finding himself unable to control the horse, began to cry for help: "Catch him, boys, catch him, or he'll have me dead," he shouted. "I'm nearly in jelly as it is." The horse was caught and brought to a stop. "Help me down, boys," said Father O'Halloran plaintively. "Dear me," as he staggered on paralytic limbs, "I never had such a ride before. Take him to Pat Connelly, some of you, and say I'm much obliged."

By this time, the people were crowding round eagerly, to see what had befallen his Reverence. The priest saw his opportunity, and mounted a heap of stones to speak to them.

"I want to say something very particular to you," he began. "You have gone through this night, so far, admirably. There has been no unpleasantness, no disturbance. But there was a terrible meaning in that cry you raised. I am sure you did not intend what it expressed, and I hope you will go no further. Believe me, you could not do yourselves or your cause more injury than by going to Kilgroom this night. Turn back, I beseech you, and do not imperil your own best interests by any wanton act of vengeance."

"Then, what will we do, yer riverence?" asked the spokesman of the crowd.

"Anything you please," answered Father O'Halloran, feeling he must not be too exacting, if he would have any influence. "Anything at all you like, except this seeking of revenge that you are bent on."

"Maybe, then, as yer Riverence won't let us pull down, we may build up," said the man.

"By all means," answered the priest, readily.

"To Barney McKinney's, then, boys," cried the man. "To Barney McKinney's, to Barney McKinney's," was taken up on every side, and the crowd wheeled about and marched in another direction. The intention was to render assistance to Barney McKinney, but on arriving there, it was found that, under the active and intelligent superintendence of Mr. Melville Johnson, the damage done by the besiegers during the day had been fully repaired. Finding themselves with nothing to do, the people began to clamor for "a spache anyway," whereupon Mr. Johnson seized a huge torch, and climbed to the roof of the house, whence he delivered an oration on Irish history, more remarkable, I am bound to state, for the crispness and originality of its rhetoric than for the accuracy of its facts. Mr. Johnson, as Mr. Bright once said of Lord Beaconsfield, had the gift of making history that would square with his own theories, and prove his own assertions, and as he was fairly well endowed with imagination, the audience was much delighted.

The address was brief, the orator justly holding that deeds, not words, were the requisites of the time. "I understand there are more houses about here that want fortifying," he said, "let us go and do them."

The crowd wanted only such a leader to turn every cabin in the countryside into a fortress, and cheered lustily.

Never had knight going forth to succor distressed beauty, or crusader searching for the Holy Grail a more enthusiastic following than the produce broker of Chicago, as he tripped nimbly across the fields, in the light of the rising moon.

The objective point was Arraghlow. It had not been fortified, because the widow had prayed with tears in her eyes to be let alone.



"If Ned was here, things would be different," she had said; "but widgeon away they can take what they like."

But now, although she was no more willing than before to receive the enemy in a fortified house, the people disregarded her entreaties and vigorously set about barricading doors and windows. Mr. Johnson took the old lady in hand while the work was being done.

"Come, my good Mrs. Blake," he said, taking her arm artfully. "If it would not seem impertinence, might I ask how much the landlord has given towards fixing up the house in this nice style."

"Nary a penny, sor," answered Mrs. Blake.

Mr. Johnson looked at her in amazement. "Nary a penny?" he repeated. "But, of course, he built the dwelling-house and the office, however?"

"No, sor, indade," answered Mrs. Blake.

Mr. Johnson looked more amazed than before. "He neither built, furnished, nor decorated?" he said.

"No, sor."

"And yet, ma'am you would go and give up possession without so much as a single protest. You are a pretty patriot, to be sure. Would your son agree to give up things like that if he were here, do you think?"

Mrs. Blake was obliged to confess she did not think he would.

"I thought not, Mrs. Blake," said Mr. Johnson, emphatically, "and so your friends and his are taking the liberty of fixing up the doors and windows a bit, just to show you consider yourself unjustly treated. And now permit me, in the name of the friends beyond the sea," and he slipped a £5 note into her hand.

The widow looked at him and then at the money, "Thank ye, sor, an' may God bliss ye for yer kind heart," she said, "but this may not be. No, sor, when they turn me out I'll get something to do. Plaise, sor, do take it back."

"Mrs. Blake," responded Mr. Johnson, "you make me exceedingly angry to suppose you wouldn't have more sense. That's not meant as charity, but as an expression of sympathy. Pooh, pooh, what nonsense, what ridiculous nonsense!" and Mr. Johnson, with an injured air, walked away to see how the work was progressing.

"Now, ma'am," he said, returning presently to the widow who still sat with the £5 note in her lap, as though she were not convinced it was not charity, "now ma'am, all's trim and taut, as we say at sea, except this one window through which we must make our exit. All that's to be done is to put in those blocks and hammer them well and prop them. How many would you like to stay with you, ma'am?"

The widow rose, and earnestly entreated that she might be left alone.

"Curious creature," remarked Mr. Johnson to himself. "not in the least typical so far as I can make out." Then aloud, "No, ma'am, we can't listen to such talk as that; you see we venture to act as we think Ned would act if he were here. Which of you ladies will stay with Mrs. Blake?" he asked smiling urbanely on half a dozen women who still lingered inside the house.

They volunteered in a body.

"Only one, please," returned Mr. Johnson. "Wait," he added the next minute. "This is an office of some danger and honor, and we must give all good patriots an equal chance. Here, we'll draw lots."

Lots were accordingly drawn, and the lucky one had her duty explained to her.

"You have only to sit here and keep the widow from dying of loneliness," said Mr. Johnson, "and when Mr. Sheriff comes knocking to the door don't you open it. Let him open it himself. Of course you can't fight, but you can keep from assisting the law. If you lay low and never let on, they'll imagine there's a garrison of a dozen men here. And now, ta! ta!" and Mr. Johnson crept through

the window, followed by all save the two women who were to remain.

Already there were intimations of the dawn, and there being no more houses to fortify, the crowd dispersed, on the understanding that there was to be a muster punctually at six o'clock.

Father O'Halloran clung to Mr. Johnson. The kindly priest thought the young American hardly understood the risk he was running and felt in duty bound to warn him.

"I suppose you understand, Mr. Johnson," said Father O'Halloran, after a little preliminary talk, "that there exists no little prejudice in the minds of officials in this country against Americans, especially if these should take any interest in the affairs of Ireland.

"I know it," answered Mr. Johnson promptly. "I wasn't fifteen minutes in Queenstown when I knew it; I was being tracked. I went up to the fellow who was shadowing me, and said that since he appeared to be rather uneasy in his mind regarding me, if he'd just step into a bar and have a cocktail, I'd put his mind and conscience as straight as an arrow in five minutes. Well we went in and sat down in a corner by ourselves. 'You're a detective of the British Government,' I said, 'and I'm Mr. Melville Johnson of Chicago, a place you may possibly have heard of, and if you think I'm come over here in charge of a cargo of dynamite, or to bust the country, or head a rebellion, or to wipe out the landlords, or lay low for the Lord-lieutenant, you're kind of out in your reckoning—that's all. See here's a letter from our Secretary of State at Washington to the American minister in London, and another to the minister at Paris, and another to the minister at Berlin, and others to half a dozen more ministers, and if you think our Secretary of State at Washington is going to give such letters of introduction to an assassin-in-general, why you'd better run me right in till you can have his character and mine inquired into.' Well,

sir, you never saw a man so completely flabbergasted in your life. And would you believe it, from that moment to this not a single detective has crossed my track."

Father O'Halloran smiled at Mr. Johnson's volubility and way of putting things.

"But, my friend," he responded, "your letters would not protect you, if you were caught red-handed, breaking the righteous law of this land, or assisting others to break it. You have already done enough to give you at least two years of the pleasant occupation of picking oakum or breaking stones. So, I'd advise you to come quietly with me and keep out of the way."

"I'd hate to do that," answered Mr. Johnson, who felt the full weight of his representative capacity. "Might look kind as if I was afraid, mightn't it?"

"You have already demonstrated to all whose opinion you need care for that you are no coward," returned Father O'Halloran, warmly, "and there is really no reason why you should throw away your liberty."

"Well, yes. I guess on the whole you're right," said Mr. Johnson, slowly. "I shouldn't like to stew in an Irish prison for an indefinite period. Must be in the wheat pit in Chicago, without fail, by the middle of October. I expect the bears will be getting lively then, and I must positively be on hand, so, I guess I will accept your offer. But, first, let's see McKinney and his folks, for they'll be expecting me back."

And mighty sorry McKinney and his folks were to lose the leadership of one whose coolness and resource had been so conspicuously displayed the day before; and manifold were the encomiums and blessings that were poured on the stranger's modest head.

"Good luck to ye, sor; may ye live to be as ould as Mathusalum an' chate the devil at last." "May throuble niver squint on ye, sor, an' long may ye remimber yer visit to ould Ireland." "An' it's happy the colleen 'll be that'll

be aafter gettin' ye for a husband, sor, an' may she get ye soon." "Bedad, sor, an' yer a bit av the rale shamrock, an' it's sorry I am yer name is not Murphy," were some of the agreeable farewell sentences, that fell on Mr. Johnson's gratified ear. But the heartiest of the lot, as was meet was left for Mrs. McKinney. Seeing him going about, kissing her numerous small children and distributing silver coin among them, she raised her hands piously and exclaimed, "Just will ye be lookin' at the swate jewil now! God bliss his dear ould heart an' may he have childer galore hissilf."

"Well, my friends," said Mr. Johnson, when the young McKinneys had been made happy, "we must part. But there's a good time coming and don't you forget it."

And amid a burst of applause that nearly rent the roof, Mr. Johnson popped lightly through the hole that had been left for ingress and egress.

Father O'Halloran followed him, and the two walked away together.

The splendors of the dawn were flaming along the battlements of the Reeks, making the crest of every dusky mountain a crown of gold, and kindling the scattering mists into patches of opalescent fire. Father O'Halloran watched the working of the daily miracle with a heart full of awe and sadness.

"Look," he said presently, taking his companion's arm and pointing eastward, "Look at all that glory of climbing light, and think what it portends to the people we have just left, and to many more. Instead of coming as it was intended it should come, with renewed strength and fresh promise, it comes as the harbinger of a terrible doom. In another hour this land will be laughing in sunshine—the birds of the air and the beasts of the field will be glad in it, and only the creatures made in God's own image denied the gracious benediction. Just think that never a sunrise comes to this unhappy country, but it brings with

it unparalleled injustice and cruelty. It is enough to make the people cry to heaven in the depth of their despair to have the sun blotted out.

"Can I bid them be content and loyal?" he added, after a pause, "can I bid them lick the hand that beats them? or shall I refrain from helping them because I am misunderstood? The Irish priesthood has to stand the brunt of many charges in connection with this Irish question, Mr. Johnson. Nothing is too dark or sinister to be insinuated of the priests, but is that any reason why they should fold their hands, and refuse the little aid they can give? They are human, and, therefore, not immaculate, but I believe they are honestly doing their best in this matter."

"I am a good Protestant, Father O'Halloran," answered Mr. Johnson. "Belong to the Methodist Episcopal Church, and think it's the best under heaven. But this isn't a question of religion; it's one of humanity and simple justice. Mind you, I think you Catholics are all out in that Pope of yours and some other things, but, hang it all, I can't see that that's any reason for abusing you and oppressing you, and treating you like a parcel of rogues."

"I wish to heaven all men were like you!" replied Father O'Halloran, fervently. "We should the sooner have peace and prosperity."

Immediately on reaching the house they sat down to an improvised breakfast with such of the evicted tenants as had accepted Father O'Halloran's hospitable offer of shelter, and while they were eating the blast of a horn sounded loudly on the still air.

"Not quite five o'clock yet," said Father O'Halloran, looking at his watch, and rising, "but I must be off. You good folks will just stay where you are," he said, addressing the refugees, "and you, Mr. Johnson," turning to the American, "had better lie down and have a sleep," and with that he hurried away.

The people were flocking into Dunbriggan, and already the police and soldiers had turned out and were standing under arms, with the Sub-Sheriff and his assistants in the midst. Presently Col. Tomkins, Mr. Wentworth and Mr. Wheelan appeared, and the forces got the order to march, the crowd at the same time beginning the uproar of the previous day, which was kept up with great heartiness and zeal till Pat McKinney's house was reached. The troops were speedily disposed in the old order, and the Sub-Sheriff repeated his demand for admission and possession. That being peremptorily refused, a shelter-shed was thrown up against the front of the house, for the passage of the posse was no longer disputed; and under this protection the crowbar brigade was soon vigorously at work. When a breach had been made, half a dozen constables rushed in with fixed bayonets, wounded two women, and after a desperate fight, in which blood was spilled, succeeded, with the assistance of the emergency men and bailiffs, in overcoming and handcuffing their male opponents. Then the furniture was tumbled out, the flag pulled down, the roof destroyed, and the victors marched away to the wail of women and children, and the hooting and groaning and cursing of the crowd.

The next place to be taken was veritably a mud hovel, which crumbled under the blows of the crowbars like a bank of dry clay. There was no sort of difficulty in making a hole in the wall. A couple of bailiffs advanced and were just about to step in, when a grisly head appeared at the opening and a skinny arm was shot out with a peremptory command to stop. The bailiffs fell back a step, as a gaunt and aged woman of gigantic height crept slowly and painfully through the hole. She drew herself up to her full stature when she was outside, and silently looked around upon the bailiffs, the emergency men and the troops. Then, observing Mr. Wheelan, she walked forward and confronted him.

"And this is you, Percy Wheelan," she said in a tone of anger and contempt, "come to see wid your own eyes that the work is done right. Well, go on, the way's clear. Let them fine fellows of yours advance. There's just me and my dying daughter. Go on! Mary Maguire won't lift a finger to stay you. Give your hounds the word—the quarry's yielding. Let them have the blood; they like it."

"Silence, hag," roared Mr. Wheelan, "or you shall rue it, I promise you."

"True to your ould self," returned the old woman, nothing daunted; "as big a talker and as craven a heart as ever. Do you know, Percy Wheelan, that I don't care that for you?" and she snapped her thumb and finger in his face. "Your vengeance cannot do more to me than it has done, and the time's coming when you and me will be aequal. But, go on; let neither stone nor stick stand. For eighty long years has that roof stood over my head, Percy Wheelan. Eighty times I have seen summer brighten and winter darken in that house. I had a husband there and children, but you and your sort have took them all but her that's inside ready to die. Do not flinch, man; you have had the loaf and may well pick up the crumbs. Go on—fling her forth. What is she that she should die in a Christian bed? Percy Wheelan," she cried, springing forward and shaking her finger so close to his face that he was obliged to take a step backward, "I curse you, and pray Heaven will blast you at every turn."

She folded her arms and glared at him, then turned away as her daughter was deposited beside her on the ground. She stood quietly until the work of demolition was complete; then as the forces were marching away, she again confronted Wheelan.

"I spit on my hand and curse you," she cried, with a look of indescribable fierceness, "hand and foot, heart and soul, I curse you."



The next to be evicted was the widow Blake, and the proceeding was not tedious, for there was no kind of resistance made. Mrs. Blake was alone, having prevailed on her companion to leave her shortly after the departure of Mr. Johnson, and when her door had been driven in, she walked out submissively at the command of the Sub-Sheriff. She stood quietly looking on till her household goods were strewn about, then she sat down on a stone, refusing to leave the place, though Father O'Halloran entreated her to go to his house with the others.

## CHAPTER XV.

LONG after the evicting force and the crowd were gone, and the quiet of the serene summer day had fallen on the scene, Mrs. Blake remained crouched on the stone, gazing at the ruinous heap beside her. At first she rocked to and fro, moaning in a dull, low voice, but presently she fell silent, and sat motionless, looking with stolid, lustreless eyes, as though she saw not all that remained to her of what she had once taken so much pride in.

She had sat in this apathetic attitude for perhaps a space of two hours, when she heard the sound of approaching footsteps, and, looking up, saw Aileen McCarthy. She did not return the girl's greeting, which was warm and tender, but gazed as though she wondered what the visit could mean.

"They have taken him from me," she said at length in a quiet voice, and she dropped her eyes to the ground.

Aileen sank on her knees beside the shrunken, doubled figure, and took the chilly, nerveless hands in her own.

"Dear Mrs. Blake," she said, almost in a sob, "do not look like that. This is all very terrible, but I have come to take you away from it. You will come with me, and never look on this place again, and in a little while you will forget your troubles and be happy again. Ned will come with us too, you know."

"Ned," repeated the widow, looking up with a vague, dreamy wistfulness, "Ned."

The girl drew a little closer up, her eyes glistening, her lips tremulous.

"Yes, dear Mrs. Blake," she said, a touch of color coming to her face in spite of the situation, "Ned will soon be back"—she could not say "out of jail"—"and then we will all live together."

Mrs. Blake swayed to and fro on her seat, and moaned, as if to say that was impossible.

"Speak to me, Mrs. Blake," said Aileen, in a tense voice; she was frightened, fancying the widow was losing her senses. "I love you as my own mother."

"But, Ned," answered the widow, stopping her rocking motion, "Ned is in jail. Is not a man who is put in jail disgraced? Is he not a criminal? and Ned will be sentenced, and what then?"

The girl rose to her feet, a spark of fire in her eyes, and her breath coming fast,

"And what if he is?" she demanded. "Are we to be ashamed of him because he has been unjustly in jail? He is not in for theft, or murder, or anything bad, but for doing what Father O'Halloran and every other man of spirit in the country has done and will do again. And if I was a man, as I'm a woman," she pursued hotly, glancing at the *debris* about her, "I should be in jail too."

Mrs. Blake had kept her eyes intently on Aileen's face during the delivery of this speech. The girl's warmth stirred her torpid faculties. She rose trembling, with big tears in her eyes, and caught Aileen in a fervid embrace.

"God bless you, Aileen," she said brokenly, "for spakin' them words."

Aileen caressed the head that was pressed against her breast, but made no attempt to stem the widow's gush of tears.

At last Mrs. Blake lifted her wet, furrowed face, and looked pathetically at Aileen.

"Aileen, I am all broke," she said. "I am not myself at all. Come and let us sit down for a little."

The girl placed a chair that had miraculously escaped damage, and helped the widow to it.

"You don't feel so bad now, do you, Mrs. Blake?" asked Aileen, sitting down by her companion.

"No, *me cailin dhu*," answered Mrs. Blake. "But, och, och, it's sore my heart is yet."

"And you will come with me, wont you?"

Mrs. Blake took Aileen's hand and stroked it absently with her fingers.

"I don't like lavin' the ould place," she replied slowly. "I could live on the flure in there till he comes back, and then we could go somewhere together."

"You mustn't think of any such thing as that," returned Aileen. "I have come for you, and I'm not going without you, so make up your mind to that."

She smiled as one does whose affectionate demands are not to be denied.

"Oh Ailie, Ailie," cried the elder woman, again bursting into tears, "I don't know what's gone wrong wid me." She said presently, "I feel as if I would just like to lie down an' never rise again."

"And that's the very reason why you shouldn't be alone," answered Aileen. "Come, let us go."

She rose, holding out her hand, and, without another word, Mrs. Blake also rose and went with her.

They had gone but a short distance when, in turning a bend in the road, they saw a pony and cart standing ahead. The pony was cropping grass on the bank, and on a stone close by a man was seated, meditatively staring at the ground. He happened to look up presently, and at sight of the two women he rose hastily, climbed into the cart, whipped up the pony without waiting to catch the reins, and started at a trot to meet them. It was Sandy McTear. He had happened to meet Aileen earlier in the day, and

learning that she was going to Arraghlaw, there and then secretly resolved to chariot Mrs. Blake up the mountain side to Ferndyke.

For this purpose he had borrowed the equipage with which he now appeared, and, though it was hardly such as his large heart would have liked, he considered it might lessen the fatigue of the journey for the stricken widow. He drew up with a flourish when he got near the astonished woman and, with great skill of horsemanship, wheeled the vehicle in the road, and dismounted.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Blake, mem," he said, with a great deal of manner. "I hope you find yourself as well as could be expected after the events of the morning. You have my very sincerest sympathy, mem."

"Thank ye, sor," said the widow, scarcely knowing what to make of the meeting. "You are always very kind."

Sandy coughed lightly and turned to take the tail-board out of his carriage.

"Will you just be good enough to let me help you in here, mem," he said, turning back to Mrs. Blake.

"Och, Misther McTear," said the dazed woman, "what does this mane at all, at all?"

"It means," answered Sandy gravely, "that if you will do me the honor to accept my conveyance—it's no' first-rate,—there's no coronet on the panel," he smiled facetiously, "and the dash-board's maybe a wee thocht worm-eaten, and the cushions are nae better than clean strae, and as for steps, why, it's kilt your coats and loup for it, as the Hieland lassie said, but it's the best to be gotten on short notice; and, as I was saying, if you will do me the honor of stepping in, I'll drive ye up to Ferndyke. Ye maun be clean forefauchin' as it is, and little able to climb thae braes."

'It's so thoughtful of you, Misther McTear," returned

the widow. "I can never thank ye for all yer kindness to me an' mine."

"I'm afraid, mem," said Sandy in sudden embarrassment, "ye'll hae to let me lift ye in," and with as much bracing up of his courage as though he were to have a tooth extracted, Sandy caught the widow in his arms and lifted her into the cart. "Now, Miss McCarthy. Eh, but the young are soople!" he exclaimed as the lithe figure swung up. Then he ceremoniously put in the tail-board, mounted to his place in front, and drove off.

Sandy was not sorry when at last he drew up at the door of Ferndyke, and sprang down to help the ladies to alight. He was still flurried as he assisted them down. The drive had not been to his satisfaction at all. He had wanted to cut something of a figure in his new rôle, and he had been an exasperating failure, and all owing to the cursed wilfulness of the pony. "I'll give it to him going down," thought Sandy, "we'll see if he'll stick in the middle of hills, and graze along the level parts."

So eager was the good man to have it out at once with the pony that he would have departed immediately, had it not been that Aileen insisted on his going into the house to have some refreshment. Inside, his vexation soon died out, and he was himself the gallant and genial man once more.

"It's so kind of Misther McTear," said the widow to Dennis McCarthy, when they were all seated at the table, "and at this time av day, too, when it must be so hard to get off."

"You are laboring under a wrong impression, mem," said Sandy. "All hours are the same to me now, for I'm my own maister."

They all looked at him with questioning eyes.

"Mr. Wheelan thought I might give the peaches and grapes a home-rule flavor," he explained, with an air of jauntiness, "if I didn't mend my ways. So he gave me

my choice of cutting the tenants or cutting my stick, and here I am, free, with all the world before me."

The widow sighed and rocked herself slightly on her chair.

"Och, och, but it's the sore time," she said, "every one in trouble. Won't you tell us all about it, Misther Mc-Tear?"

"There's not much to tell," answered Sandy. "Mr. Wheelan undertook to ask me point-blank if I was scouring the country yon Sawbath evening for Ned, ye ken, and I undertook to answer point-blank that I was. 'Well,' says he, 'the man that goes and helps the Colonel's enemies cannot receive the Colonel's money.' 'As you please, sir,' said I, 'if the Colonel thocht to buy my soul when he hired the temporary use o' my body, he was a' wrang in his reckoning. I'm quite willing to look after the Colonel's gairden, according to agreement, but if he expects me to strangle a' my natural inclinations and the wee glint o' sympathy that my Maker has seen fit to put in my heart, then good day to his highness! 'You have been a good gardener, I'll allow,' he said to me, though I kenned how muckle saut to take wi' the statement, 'and I would be loth to dismiss you.' 'Dismiss,' quo' I, 'I'll save ye a' trouble on that head. If ye'll just be so good as clear the score atween us, the place is open for another this minute. And the short and the long o' it is, I'm clear o' Kilgroom, and hae thochts o' emigratin'!"

"Of emigrating!" said Aileen and Mrs. Blake, in the same voice.

"Yes, there's this Mr. Johnson, o' America, wants a gairdener, it seems, and he told Father O'Halloran, the place is mine if I like to go. He maun hae an unco braw place, for I'd hae two men under me."

"And are you going?" asked Aileen.

"Weel, I have nae jist said the word," answered Sandy, glancing covertly at the widow. "I have asked them if

they could keep the place open for a while, and Mr. Johnson says he can,—and there I am. I wouldn't like to go away just yet till I'd see the end o' this botheration. Meantime Mrs. Muroon has given me a room at the *Shamrock*, and though a public hoose is no just the portal o' heaven, I'm real comfortable."

That seemed to exhaust the topics of conversation, and presently Sandy rose to go.

"I hope ye'll hae your health up here, mem," he said to the widow, as he climbed into the cart. "Miss McCarthy, I ken, will be good to you."

He took up the reins, and he and the pony started, a strangely-assorted pair.



## CHAPTER XVI.

UP in the high altitude of Ferndyke, nestling on the flank of the mountain, aloof, as it were, from the world and its feverish, troublous life, it might have seemed the ideal of sylvan existence. And for a time Mrs. Blake felt the mysterious uplifting power of the rarefied air, the peace, and the wide sunlit spaces. Nor were there wanting other things to keep the widow from brooding too deeply on her own troubles : Aileen was more than a daughter in assiduity and affection, Kathleen was winsome and full of talk, and Dennis himself was genuinely, if quietly, sympathetic. Moreover, Sandy, being now a man of leisure, was a frequent visitor at Ferndyke, and was able to bring news of Ned's satisfactory progress toward physical wholeness ; so that if Mrs. Blake could scarcely be called happy, she was at least temporarily tranquil. I say temporarily, for as time passed and Ned did not return, the old aching sense of desolation came back upon her. Not all Aileen's ingenuity and cheerfulness, nor Dennis's heartfelt sympathy, nor Sandy's fantastic gallantry, nor nature's sweetness and serenity, could lift her mind or keep her attention. Watching her opportunity she would steal out of sight, and in some obscure nook sit for hours together as still as a statue, her hands lying listlessly in her lap, her unseeing eyes fixed straight before her. Often there was a considerable search ere she could be found, and once when Dennis discovered her sitting among bare tree-roots in a

little clump of wood it required some persuasion to induce her to return to the house.

"I want to die," she said. "If you'd only lave me alone to die. What's the use av livin'?"

"Childer's a sore blessin' sometimes," she said, at another time, when Dennis was trying to administer some crumbs of comfort; "when they're little they pull at your apron strings, and when they're big they pull at your heart."

Mrs. Blake had not been to chapel since Ned's arrest, and one day it occurred to Aileen that it might prove a grateful diversion to her to be taken there. The proposition was made and eagerly assented to; and accordingly the next Sunday morning being fine, the two women went to hear Father O'Halloran preach.

The chapel was crowded that day, as it had been so often of late,—a large proportion of the congregation being young men. Father O'Halloran preached with even more than his wonted fervor. It was rarely that he spoke now without making some reference to the state of the country; latterly those references had often indicated a mind at variance with itself, as though the priestly conscience and the natural human instinct were at war. To-day he seemed more uncertain of himself than ever. His text was from Isaiah, "Jerusalem is ruined and Judah is fallen. For it is a day of trouble and of treading down and of perplexity."

He began with a rapid sketch of the history of Ireland from the earliest times to the present. He pictured Ireland sitting in the darkness of the early ages like a hospitable queen of light in the western sea, giving gratuitous food and raiment and enlightenment to pilgrims from distant lands. He dwelt with rapture on the accomplishment and genius of her sons, whom it pleased Heaven to make the custodians of learning when the other nations of Europe had little more culture than the Hottentots have

to-day. When England was peopled by barbarians, who streaked their bodies with paint, and lived on roots and beasts of the chase, Ireland had famous schools, built beautiful churches and cathedrals, and was the chosen home of poetry and the arts. "But there came darkness and trouble—how, one could hardly say, and Ireland fell from her high and proud estate. Had she been cast down in punishment, debased that she might learn of her own transgressions?" Suddenly he stopped and looked down at his audience as though he would read the response in their hearts.

"It is a day of trouble and of treading down and of perplexity, he said, in a voice that was pathetic and subdued, yet which reached every corner of the spacious building. "It is a day of trouble and of treading down and of perplexity," a day of trouble and treading to many, and of sore perplexity to me. My friends, what if you and I are all wrong? What if, in the sight of Omniscience, we are all veritably kicking against the pricks? My dear people, I love you as the apple of my eye, and would guide you through the troublous waters that now beset you at the risk of my life. I am this moment a criminal in the eyes of the law, but I would gladly go to prison and persecution, for your sakes, if so be my going would benefit you. You look up to me for help, and I am weak." He stopped with a strain of utter helplessness in his voice, and looked appealingly at his congregation. Every eye was fixed on him, and not a full breath could be heard in the whole house. In the midst of the tense silence an ominous sound smote the air. The noise came nearer and nearer, there was the rattle of a vehicle, and the beating of many hoofs. A minute later the noise stopped, at a ringing word of command. Then footsteps were heard on the path leading to the chapel door, and shadows fell athwart the floor. There was a momentary pause; then two policemen entered, and with helmets in hand stood staring at the preacher.

The congregation got to its feet, many of the men crowding out into the aisles. Then more policemen entered. A threatening murmur rose, but was instantly checked by Father O'Halloran.

"You want me?" he said to the police.

One of the men nodded, and began to advance toward the preacher, but he was immediately stopped.

"Ye won't get forward here," growled a hundred angry voices. "Ye may do what ye like outside; but you're not going to desecrate our chapel."

The constable turned, looked meaningly at his comrades, and they too stepped forward with their hands on their weapons, ready to draw.

"Would you be good enough to show me your warrant, sergeant?" Father O'Halloran said, addressing the policeman. "I am ready," he said, when he had read it. "I understood your business, and made myself ready before coming forward."

Again the male portion of the congregation trooped into the aisles, with muttered threats and angry expressions. But the police closed about their prisoner with drawn arms and led him to the door,—the congregation following along the passages and over the pews with futile cries of vengeance.

Outside there were more police, besides a body of horse soldiers drawn up with naked swords; there was also a car for Father O'Halloran. He was quickly helped in, the sergeant sprang up beside him; two constables with loaded guns getting on the other side. The jarvey got the word, the military closed in behind, and the procession was off at a trot, leaving the people gaping and execrating.

In consequence of the excitement, it was some time ere Mrs. Blake found herself strong enough to walk, and when she did make a start, Aileen had almost to carry her.

## CHAPTER XVII.

WHILE Ned languished in jail awaiting his trial on some unstated charge, of the nature of which he was in perfect ignorance, his time was chiefly spent in wondering what the world was doing, and how it was getting along without him. Had the evictions been carried out? And if so, what had been the attendant indignities and barbarities? What had become of his mother? Where was she? Living at Arraghlow on sufferance, or was she at Fern- dyke, or in the workhouse, or was she dead? And Aileen, what was she doing? How was she bearing his imprisonment?

He often asked about his trial; what the charges against him were, and when he should have an opportunity of refuting them; but his jailors were taciturn and indisposed to impart information. One night, after a day of unusual mental turmoil, he lay on his bed, tired, yet busy with schemes of revenge for all the cruelties that were being inflicted upon him. Not one of his enemies should escape; no, not so much as one.

"I'm ruined now, anyway," he said to himself, savagely. "Things can't possibly be worse wid me than they are, and I'll have revenge." And as he lay making his plans, suddenly his door opened, and a warder entered.

Ned glared at the intruder in sullen defiance.

"Come on," said the warder, throwing the door wide open, and stepping aside to make way.

"Where?," demanded he, fiercely.

"Come along and you'll see," answered the warder.

"You can go to the devil," cried Ned ferociously, starting to his elbow. "I'll not budge an inch for one of yees. You come in here to turn me out to some other place, as if I was a brute baste. You'd better be out wid ye in double-quick time, and shut that dure."

"You're the funniest man I ever saw," said the warder, with a little laugh.

"Look here," cried Ned, jumping to his feet with clenched fists, "don't you be after laughin' like that again, or I'll spatter yer brains on the door-post."

"You're the first prisoner I ever saw threatening the man who was giving him his freedom," returned the warder, stepping back out of Ned's way.

Ned looked the man craftily in the face.

"Freedom," he repeated, "what d'ye mane?"

"That you're free."

"You'd better not be mocking me," said Ned, advancing a step, while the warder retired a step. "If this is a dodge to get me out of this for some other place, I'll have yer life, an' I don't care what happens."

"All I have to say is, 'walk out,'" said the warder, smiling.

Ned stood a moment looking at the man in bewilderment, then passed through the open door and along a corridor, and through other doors and passages till he found himself in the street.

"Good-bye," said the warder, closing the heavy outer door. "You'll maybe know a friend again when you see him."

Ned looked about him for a minute before he could convince himself that the starry sky, and the looming mountains, and the yellow street lamps were not the images of a dream. Then, when assured of their reality, he began to walk, wondering whither he should turn. Before he had decided, he stood in front of The Shamrock. The door was wide open, letting out a stream of warm invit-

ing light. He turned and went in, thinking he might get intelligence of all that had happened since his incarceration.

Mrs. Muroon, at sight of him, raised her hands and uttered a cry, as though she beheld a supernatural visitant ; some men who sat with glasses of steaming whisky punch, and mugs of creamy stout before them, likewise gave signs of intense astonishment.

"An' sure, is it yerself, Ned Blake, or is it yer ghost?" asked Mrs. Muroon, recovering her power of speech.

"It's all that's left of me, Mrs. Muroon," answered Ned.

"An' troth ye don't look well," said Mrs. Muroon, examining him more closely. "I declare I would hardly have knowed ye."

"Would you mind giving a fellow widout a copper till he comes into his estates," said Ned, "something to drink, Mrs. Muroon?"

"Troth, that will I, Ned," responded the landlady, beamingly. "What will ye be havin'?"

"Och, just anything that lifts the spirits from the boots," answered Ned.

"I know, I know," said Mrs. Muroon, making a dive at a tumbler and a lemon. "A taste of punch is the thing for the like of you."

"Yer very good health, Mrs. Muroon," said Ned, taking up the glass, "and may ye never have worse to give a poor boy trudgin' home from jail. Your health, gentlemen, may ye never have a bullet in ye, or become the guests of the government."

"There's been big doings since ye went in, Ned," said Mrs. Muroon, finding her news burning her tongue. "Mr. Wheelan has been riding his highest horse. Yer mother and the rest of them were evicted ; Father O'Halloran's in jail now—arrested in his own chapel on Sunday, before he was half done prachin'. I seen it wid my own eyes, and a sorry sight it was, but there he is, safe, the

people say, for a whole year ; and Mr. McTear is stoppin' wid me now, because he's not looking after the Castle garden any more, and a right dacent bodv he is—for a Protestant.

Ned attended to his glass with an expression of unconcern, while the landlady recounted all this, yet deep in his heart the turbulent passions were raging like the waves of the sea in an unseen cavern.

"An' now that I have got the cockles av me heart warmed," said Ned, suddenly, "I must be off."

Mrs. Muroon would have asked him where he was going, had not Ned vanished before she could put the question.

"Poor boy," she said, with motherly tenderness. "It's the first time he has left Dunbriggan widout a home to go to. I wonder what he'll do now?"

When Ned was again in the street he turned towards Arraghlow. He would see the old place first, and then go in search of his mother. Several times during his brief visit to The Shamrock, it had been on the tip of his tongue to ask Mrs. Muroon if she knew aught of her whereabouts ; but a foolish pride—a repugnance to letting the public into his heart restrained him, and he had come away without putting the one question that occupied his mind. But he would find her. He would go to Aileen ; she would enlighten him, and, perhaps, he should find it unnecessary to go further.

He was soon clear of the lights and streets of the town, and walking rapidly along the highway. He tried to picture what was before him, and a thousand haggard images flashed upon his fevered brain. He knew well the utterness of desolation that follows an eviction, and the whole wretched sequel rose before him. And as he thought of his mother, his hands and teeth involuntarily clenched, and again he worse to be avenged.

Presently he sighted the dark patch of wood which had



overshadowed his home as he had left it, and his heart beat tumultuously. When he came up he found the little gate which he had made with so much pride, because it had pleased his mother, lying away and broken. It was the first ominous intimation of what was awaiting him. He laid the gate aside, and looked up, wondering why he did not catch the familiar outline of the house ; then, holding his breath, he ran forward till he stumbled among stones and broken pieces of wood. Great heavens ! what did all this mean ? He leaped on like a wounded deer, but could find only *debris*.

"My God," he exclaimed, staggering as though about to fall, "Is it so bad as this ? Not a foot of the wall standing !"

He stumbled farther forward to look for the out-houses ; but they too were gone—all gone ; every wall about the place levelled to the ground. In his worst dreams he had never pictured a ruin like this. The utmost ingenuity of malignity could not have compassed a completer demolition. He stood for a little in blank stupefaction, then sank to the ground, shivering and groaning like a creature in mortal pain.

When Ned rose to his feet again, it was with a passion of revolt and savageness that might well have awed one not mentally and morally blinded. He walked round the ruins once more. The staggering step was gone : the tread was fierce and resolute now.

"Not a stick or a stone standing," he said aloud, "not one."

Then he kneeled, crossing himself, and turned his face to the sky.

"On this spot, I swear by God in Heaven and the blessed Virgin, to kill the man who has done this !" he said ; then he crossed himself again and rose to his feet.

As he did so, he fancied he heard a stealthy movement close by, and stooping, discovered the cat on a stone beside him. He spoke to it, and the animal recognizing his

voice, began to purr and rub itself against his leg. He took it up in his arms and stroked it, laying his burning cheek against its soft fur.

"This is a strange meeting, isn't it, puss?" he said to it, "meeting among the ruins of our ould home."

He hugged the beast so close that it began to squirm and protest.

"Don't scratch, pussy," he said; "many's the time ye've been in my arms, and this is the last; for, my pet, we must be parting."

As he turned away, he heard some one singing at no great distance, and stopped to hearken. The notes were wild and broken, often interrupted for many seconds together, as though the singer were singing without much thought of the song, and then, breaking out again in what was little better than a shrill yell.

Presently Ned was able to distinguish the words:—

'The bride she bound her golden hair,  
Kileevy, O Kileevy,  
And her step was light as the breezy air  
When it bends the morning flowers so fair,  
By the bonnie green woods of Kileevy.  
And, oh, but her eyes they danced so bright,  
Kileevy, O Kileevy,  
As she longed for the dawn of to-morrow's light,  
Her bridal vows of love to plight,  
By the bonnie green woods of Kileevy."

The singing ceased, and a peal of shrill, hysterical laughter broke out. Then once more the song:

"And Beirdra, the Druid, made answer as thus—  
A priest of a hundred years was he—  
Dathy! thy fate is not hidden from us.  
Hear it through me;  
Thou shalt work thine own sweet will,  
Thou shalt slay, thou shalt prey,  
And be conqueror still."

Then silence !

Ned could now dimly discern what seemed a gigantic figure on the road. It moved with a constant tossing of the head, and waving of the hands, as though it were engaged in some earnest debate with itself. On reaching the little gate, it stopped.

"Arraghlaw," he heard a croaking voice say, "Arraghlaw, that was Arraghlaw, that is not Arraghlaw, that never shall be again. Let me see Arraghlaw," and with that the figure turned in at the gate, and came stumbling up the path.

Ned could now distinguish the shape of a woman, tall and apparently gaunt, her hair over her shoulders and a loose flowing garment about her person. Had he been in a mood to feel fear, his hair might have shown a tendency to rise, so singularly uncanny were the woman's movements and appearance.

"As level as the earth, be the howly Virgin !" she said, coming to a standstill among the stones. "Here's a fine laying-out now. The scythe couldn't do better wid the grass, nor the people at a wake wid the corpse. A gable's been left me, and I can go to either side as the wind shifts ; but here's not a stone could touch the calf av me leg, nor a wall high enough for this year's lamb to ease its itch on ; here's not shelter for a coney ; be the howly St. Patrick, it's a fine laying-out, to be sure. Man puts his trust in houses, an' so does woman, more fool she," with a bitter satirical laugh, "an' me lord blows a frowning breath an', topsy-turvy, over they go, heels over head. What might stone walls be built for now ? Faix for crowbars. What's the people that's inside made for ? For me lord's playthings, av coorse. Me lord has money, me lord lives in a fine castle, wid servants galore. Me lord's rich an' buys up creation for his own divarsion, an' that's the way wid us all. Now, here I am standing, maybe in the best room av Arraghlaw, an' nary a partition or anything else to stay

me foot. That's what ye might call a revolution now. We'll be after walking on our heads bimeby. An' it was a tidy place, be the powers it was so. An' mighty proud that ould woman an' her boy was av it; an' look at it now, a hungry crow wouldn't think av stoppin' to have a minit's pickin' an' ho, ho!" as she spied Ned, "who is this that watches the ruins like a pot of gold? A man, a young man too: Ned Blake, if I'm not a ghost."

"And who meets Ned Blake at such a place and hour as this?" demanded Ned.

"Faix, ye'll have to be after axin' somebody wiser than me," answered the woman, with a little trill of laughter. "Who I am or what I am 's more than I can tell. But I'll tell ye who I used to be. I used to be Mary Maguire av the Knockindhu, an' now I suppose widout a name as she's widout everything else."

"And, in heaven's name, Mary, what brings you here at such a time?" asked Ned, advancing to where the woman stood. "Why are you not in bed somewhere?"

"I'm thinkin' it's little wit I have left, Ned," replied Mary. "But faix I'm not that far gone but I can understand ye must *have* a bed before ye lie down on it. There's only wan bed, Ned, that I have ever heard av, where ye can lie down widout axin' anybody's lave; an' some av these nights, Ned, I'll be tucked in. Rosaleen's there now. She kissed me before she went, an' said, 'Mother, dear, yer ould feet are tired, but ye'll soon get rest. We've all gone before an' left you last, but ye'll come soon, mother.' Them were the words she spoke at goin'."

"Come, Mary," answered Ned in a thick voice. "Come, let us leave this place."

"Lave the place," repeated Mary. "Surely we'll lave it."

'Then Oro come with me, come with me, come with me  
Oro, come with me, brown girl sweet.'

"This fine laying out is the work of Misther Wheelan,"

she said, looking back. "I cursed him the other day, head an' foot, heart an' soul," and then she turned, and followed Ned, presently beginning to sing again.

She stopped suddenly at the sound of some one ejaculating in the road.

"Ho, ho ! More midnight birds," she called.

' Are you friend, or are you foe,  
Will you stay, or will you go ?'

That's the question to be answered."

" God bless us a', what hae we here ? " came in response.

" Are ye the deil, or are ye a daft body ? "

Ned stepped forward and spoke :

" How are you, Misther McTear ? " he said, " I knew yer voice."

" Oh Ned, Ned ! " responded Sandy fervently, grasping the outstretched hand, " what hae we here ? ' Fegs, I got a real fright. I'm no superstitious, ye ken," he explained ; " not in the least. But it happened curiously enough, that as I came along in the dark under thae trees I was thinkin' o' that poem o' Burns's where the irreverent rascal addresses the de'il, ye ken ; and somehow the lines :

" I've heard my reverend grannie say,  
In lonely glens ye like to stray ;  
Or where auld ruined castles gray,  
Nod to the moon,  
To fright the nightly wanderer's way  
Wi eldritch croon,

were running in my head, when out comes this eldritch skirl and made me kind o' jump, as it were. And the puir thing's gyte," pointing to the woman who was now some distance ahead.

Ned simply nodded.

" And nae wonder," said Sandy, " Her bit place levelled

to the ground, her daughter dead, and her a'ta'en frae her. And your bit place, too, Ned ;—but dinna let us speak o' it the now. You're free again, and that's something to be thankful for. I was real sorry I wasna at The Shamrock when ye lookit in, but the fact 'is I was up at Ferndyke seeing how they were a' there, and ye'll be glad to hear they're a' as weel as could reasonably be expectit. Ye'll doubtless ken your mother's there ? ”

“ No, Misther McTear,” answered Ned, “ I didn't know. I heard in The Shamrock she had been evicted, but that was all. I went along thinkin' maybe to see her at Arraghlow, and found it levelled to the ground. And you have been evicted too, Misther McTear ? ”

“ Hoot, toot ! that's nothing at a',” replied Sandy, with a great air of indifference. “ I'm no' caring twopence aboot that. I have another offer already, man—but we'll talk o' that, by and bye. In the meantime we'll better hurry forrit and see if we can do anything for this puir cretur.”

Mary Maguire was going along as though she were quite alone, singing snatches of song, and at times breaking into curdling fits of laughter.

“ Clean demented, clean daft,” said Sandy, after one of these bursts. “ They say she cursed Wheelan wi' an awfu' curse the other day. Hey, Mrs. Maguire ! ” he called out. “ You have the spunk o' a lassie o' fifteen. I declare you're renewing your youth like the eagle.”

“ I'll be an aigle wan av them days,” she answered, wheeling about. “ I'll be an aigle in two ways. I'll be where I'm not expected, an' I'll fly where no man can follow. Will you tell me this, you that's got all the sinse that God gave, for indade I'm thinkin' mine has left me,—will you tell me this—which is worse off, him that's houseless, childless an' penniless, or him that's roulin' in plenty under a curse ? The weight of a curse drags down, down to hell, doesn't it ? The want of a house, or child, or money makes ye light to fly up, doesn't it ? ”

"I think you're e'en right, Mrs. Maguire," said Sandy.  
"Something tould me so," said Mary; and again she began to sing :

"The mouth is closed, and Green Truagha's pride.  
Kileevy, O Kileevy,  
Is married to death, and side by side  
Heslumpers now with his churchyard bride,  
By the bonny green woods of Kileevy.

Ha, ha ! me lord, an' that's the end, is it ? An' here, gentlemen, is ould Mary's road. Good-night t'ye. We'll maybe meet agen before we die."

With that she climbed over a stile, and with a wave of the hand disappeared in the blackness of a coppice. The men stood for a minute looking in the direction in which she had gone, then resumed their walk.

"I suppose there's no use in following her," said Sandy. "Puir body, it makes a body's heart sair to think of her wandering about at this time of night wi' naebody to see to her. Hech, hech, it's a sair world ! And that minds me, I had clean forgotten to ask about your hurt, Ned. I hope you're a' right again."

"All right, so far as that's concerned," answered Ned with a bitter emphasis.

"Ay, ay ! we ken there's mair nor that to trouble ye," said Sandy, sympathetically. "Ye'll of course go straight up and see your mother. My ! but she'll be the glad woman this night, for she had no idea you were to be liberated. Hae ye formed any plans, Ned ? Hae ye any idea what you're to do wi' yersel ?"

"The first thing I have to do is to settle scores wid Misther Wheelan," answered Ned.

"For the Lord's sake, Ned, dinna be thinkin' o' anything o' the kind," pleaded Sandy. "You're out now, and keep out."

"I'll keep out, Misther McTear, never you fear," returned

Ned; "but I must see Misther Wheelan to tell him how much I think av his work."

"Mind your mother an' Aileen, Ned," said Sandy. "Dinna be going and doing things that would bring heart-break and disgrace on them." Ned waived the question and turned to other matters. After promising to go straight to Ferndyke, he bade Sandy good-night.

The east was already getting clear as he ascended the steep slopes, and, by the time he reached Ferndyke, day had dawned.

His intention was to steal in unseen, and take them all by surprise, but his mother, roused by the barking of Teagh, looked through her window, and, seeing who was coming, ran out, alarming the whole house.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

MR. PERCY WHEELAN sat down to write to Colonel Croker, in a style characteristically callous and jaunty:

"The evictions have been carried out," he began, with military directness, "and you are unconditionally in possession of the disputed territories. The houses of the malcontents are level with the ground, and the jails have received fresh contingents, among whom, you will perhaps regret to hear, was your old friend and well-wisher, Father O'Halloran. He was arrested in the pulpit, while haranguing in his usual saintly strain. We have had Mr. Edward Blake in, too, but had to let him go for want of witnesses. We tried several, but they hesitated about the matter, and we thought it best not to rely on them; so Mr. Blake went free. But it is hardly probable he will be able to keep long out of mischief, and the police will have their eye on him.

"I may say the evictions were not accomplished without a good deal of trouble, and much unnecessary delay, owing chiefly to the absurd restrictions placed upon the evicting forces. The fact is, Colonel, as I need hardly remind you, the Government is far too humane. When they send an evicting force, they deprive it of pretty nearly all its efficiency by absurd restrictions. It's not the king that's hedged about by a divinity nowadays; but the ruffianly tenant who refuses to pay his rent or give up possession of another man's house. I wish to heaven, Colonel, you were here with your *Rangers*. If the government

don't put on the screw tighter, we may all emigrate to Van Dieman's Land, or Timbuctoo, or anywhere else we like. We had Sir Jorum here the other day. I was fearfully disappointed in him. He actually seemed to think there is something in the tenant's cry of injustice. I suppose it's infatuation of this sort which leads the Government to be so outrageously lenient.

"I have been half-abusing the Government, and yet it ill becomes me, in a personal sense, as it has startled me with a quite unexpected mark of honor. Knowing, I suppose, that you were likely to be absent for some time, it has been graciously pleased to place my name on the commission of the peace for the county. I take it, however, as rather a recognition of the important influence of the owner of Kilgroom than as any tribute to my own small worth."

Three days later a reply came. The gallant colonel was manifestly not in the best of humors, judging from the following extracts:

"The Government is not worth a damn. It will do nothing but shilly-shally, dilly-dally and debate, while we are being plundered and robbed by a parcel of lazy, scheming, dishonest vagabonds, and base, self-seeking seditious. I am beginning to see that none but an Irish landlord should be Chief Secretary for Ireland. We shall never have justice until we have a man like, say—the Marquis of Clanricarde in the Cabinet, with *carte blanche* to deal with disaffection as he sees fit. As things go, then, we must mainly depend on ourselves. Do not relax your hand. Grind them—I mean the tenants. What the devil right have they to complain? I am glad that priest is fast by the heels. Let them keep him. If they can't make him work for his board and lodging, I will subscribe myself. Keep your eye on Blake; he seems to be a bad, dangerous character.

"Let me congratulate you on your honors; they are well deserved."

Mr. Wheelan lay back in his chair when he had read this letter, and pulled placidly at his cigar.

"The colonel seems rather in a pucker," he remarked quietly to himself. "Perhaps he has had forebodings; perhaps coming events are casting their shadows before—they do that sometimes, I believe. And indeed, looking at the thing dispassionately, I am inclined to think landlordism is doomed in this pretty little Island of ours; though it doesn't suit my policy to hint of anything of the sort. The Marquis of Clanricarde in the Cabinet! Very good, indeed—excellent! The Marquis of Clanricarde, boss of the Irish office, and Colonel Croker of Kilgroom, to assist him—he, he, he!"

Mr. Wheelan was positively merry over this idea. "Ireland should have justice then, and no mistake. Jedburgh justice, and no pinching, of the measure. He! he! he! very good idea! Capital! The Marquis of Clanricarde in the Cabinet. It's a wonder the thing wasn't thought of long ago," and again Mr. Wheelan chuckled.

"Well, well," he added, more seriously, "desperate diseases require desperate remedies, that's well known; and that being so, we must each look out for himself. If the whole thing were to go to smoke, I believe I could live. I believe I could, but I wouldn't invest any capital in Irish land with the Marquis of Clanricarde, and Colonel Croker, of Kilgroom, at the Irish office. Not bad for the colonel, not bad at all; anger makes him facetious. Landlordism is on its last legs, but as long as the paymaster holds out I suppose it's my duty to be loyal. But the colonel's what Artemus Ward would call an amoozin' cuss. The Marquis of Clanricarde in the Cabinet! He, he, he!"

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## CHAPTER XIX.

NOTWITHSTANDING his vows of vengeance, when Ned once more found himself enjoying the delights of affection, freedom, and Christian lodging, he made resolute efforts to take fresh hold of life. In his calmer moments, none recognized more clearly than he what any attempt to take revenge on his persecutors should end in. If he tried to smite and kill his enemy, it would be in direct disregard of the warnings of an intelligence sharp enough to discern that any such victory meant certain disaster and death to himself. He knew from intuition and observation that revenge recoils upon the aggressor, that in a case like his, triumph and defeat walked hand-in-hand ; and so, to divert his mind from that dark project he had formed that midnight hour among the ruins of Arraghlow, he strove, with a kind of desperate vehemence, to occupy his mind with other things. He helped Dennis with the work of the farm, with a vigor that left the old man little occupation save the pensive one of admiring the untirable strength and irrepressible buoyancy of youth ; he jested and laughed loudly on all opportunities, and, above all, he avoided, as far as was possible, being alone with his own thoughts. And if at that time he could have been smuggled away to some distant place, where he would not have been perpetually reminded of his wrongs, the demon in his soul might have been exorcised. But, alas, for human fate and human affection ! Those about him, mistaking Ned's energy and lightness and gaiety for evidences of a revived

hope and a fresh interest in the world, made efforts to keep him where he was ; and were only too successful. For presently, when he began to weary of the continual fleeing from self, and, as a consequence, to feel ashamed of the sorry deceit he was practising on others, the dark dire passion for revenge blazed anew within him. Aileen was the first to discover the rekindled flame, Ned and she, after the day's labor, climbed to an overhanging spur of the mountain, partly for the view, but chiefly to have a quiet hour by themselves. Aileen was supremely happy as she leaned on her lover's arm up the steep, rocky way. All that she had so long and so often dreamed of was at last coming to pass. Ned and she were again together.

Rarely had Ned seen her looking so lovely ; and never, he thought, had he found her leaning on himself with such perfect trust and contentment. His heart melted with pity. "If she only knew," he thought, "if she only knew."

On reaching the top, they sat down on a rock-promontory, covered with many tinted mosses and lichens, now warm in the evening sun.

"Isn't it lovely ?" said Aileen rapturously, and she began to distinguish the more notable points by name.

"See, there's Kilgroom," she said, at last.

Ned looked down upon the castle and its rich surroundings of wood and meadow, now crimson and gold in the light of the declining sun.

"Yes," answered Ned, with a set face, "that's Kilgroom, a fine, proud place ; and look you, Aileen, through the trees yonder—you see yon gap—and tell me what you see there."

The girl cast her eyes in the direction indicated with a sudden misgiving.

"I see the ruins of Arraghlaw," she said. "But, Ned, dear, don't be thinking of it. It's all past and gone now, and may be forgotten."

She turned to him with a look of appeal, and laid her

hand on his arm. He gave no heed. The rising tempest in his mind blinded him to anything tender.

"You see the ruins of Arraghlow," he said in a voice tense with passion. "Yes, you see the ruins of Arraghlow, and you see Kilgroom down there. The home of Col. Croker, and all that remains of what was once my home."

His eyes were burning and his face crimson.

The girl beside him saw his virulence of rage with a sudden constriction of the heart. Oh, why had she drawn his attention to Kilgroom? Why had they come up here at all? Why—why was the passion she had thought dead coming back like this?

"They have levelled that house," he went on again, before she could say a word. "They have driven every living thing about the place away; and, to give themselves a chance of doing all this without any hindrance but what an ould woman, that wouldn't scare a cat from her milk-jug, would give, they shot me and threw me into jail. I know it. That was why I was arrested: I did nothing wrong; they had no charge against me, and let me go without one word when everything was done. Oh, curse them!"

He leaped to his feet; his hands were fiercely clenched, and his face was now a deathly pallor. The girl, too, rose, trembling with terror.

"I'm sorry we came up here, Ned," she said, her anguish in her voice, "if it brings all these bad thoughts to your mind."

"It hasn't brought them, Aileen," he answered, "for they have never been away since the night I found Arraghlow in ruins. Would I be likely to forget them, do you think, after all that's been done to me? After being shot down like a brute baste, and thrown in jail, and kept there as if I was a murderer or a thief, or any common vermin, till they got what they wanted done, I ask you, would I be likely to forget them thoughts? I ask any man

to put himself in my place and see if he'd forget them thoughts. I didn't, anyway, and I may tell ye, Aileen, that when I laughed loudest and was fullest of nonsense, and was busiest at work they were most upon me, and when I was in bed I didn't sleep, but planned. Oh! I couldn't get them out of my head, and I'm not going to try any more."

"Oh, Ned!"

"And down there is the man that done it all," he went on, disregarding the girl's interruption. "He has ruined me. Stripped me of home and money and cattle and everything but the clothes on my back. He took from me ten times as much as I owed him, and he dragged my mother out when I was not there to take her part, as if she was no better than a dog. Think of it, Aileen, and think, too, which is far worse, that he has put me that I cannot marry you. There is no use thinking that I can, for I cannot; and it's all along of him. Oh, he has trampled on me as if I was dirt under his feet. But I will trample on him before I die. I'll do that, whatever happens. I'll be even with him."

The girl gazed at Ned in terror and bewilderment. What had become of all her dreams of bliss? What was this she was listening to? Vows of vengeance—a vengeance that meant the utter blasting of all her hopes. And yet it was not of herself, but of her lover she was thinking, and how she could save him from the fearful precipice to which he was rushing.

"Ned, Ned," she cried, in inexpressible anguish, "say you don't mean that; you cannot mean it! Say that you are joking, that you are just trying to frighten me."

She put both hands on his arm and looked into his face with straining eyes.

The lividness partially went from Ned's face, as he bent towards her, and the tenseness of his voice relaxed as he spoke; but his words were still cruel.

"I am not trying to frighten you, darlint," he said. "I have lost everything I had. I have lost you—you, darlint, that was my thought by day and my dream by night—I have lost you. Think of it, Aileen," he cried, starting back in a fresh burst of fury. "Think of it all, from beginning to end, and tell me, if you were a man, would you not be revenged? Think that my mother and me are beggars. I know how it will be," he went on passionately, as he observed the girl wanted to speak; "I will be another branded criminal and a text for them that's fond of preaching sermons on the wickedness of the Irish people, without the slightest notion of how the Irish people are robbed and goaded. I know it all, and I'm ready for it."

"You won't do that, Ned," said the girl beseechingly, "will you?"

She laid an arm on his shoulder, and her head fell on his breast, while the sobs shook her convulsively.

Ned instantly softened, as he nearly always did at her touch.

"Aileen, darlint," he said, bending over her with tender concern, "Aileen, my jewel, don't be crying like that."

There was no answer, but the arm that rested on his shoulder crept softly about his neck.

If anything in the world could have made Ned forget his dream of vengeance it was his love for Aileen. Long, long had it been the mainspring of all his best actions. It was for her he had worked so hard in repairing and beautifying the house at Arraghlow. It was for Aileen the paper and timber had been used which had resulted in so ruinous a raising of the rent. And now, if he could have persuaded himself of the possibility of making Aileen his wife, under conditions that would not have been galling to his self-respect, he might have been content to see other things go,—nay, he might even have forgiven those who oppressed and persecuted him; but he could see no such possibility, and the absence of it was an added incentive to



revenge. But for the moment he was in contact with her he was softened in spite of all his anger.

"Aileen," he whispered, gently.

Something in the tone gave the girl hope, and she looked up quickly.

But he had nothing to say to her, except to dry her tears and repeat her name fondly.

"You're calmer now, Ned, aren't you?" she asked quietly, after rubbing her eyes.

"I'm quite calm, darlint," answered Ned.

"You were very angry, Ned," she said, playing with a button on his coat. "You fairly frightened me; but you'll forget all your anger. If I was you I wouldn't let them see they could disturb me so much. But there, the sun's going down, it'll be dark in a little. Come, let us go down."

She took his arm and they started.

"Aileen, I have something to say to you," said Ned, after walking some distance in silence, "but I won't say it unless you promise not to be angry with me."

"I'll not be angry with you," answered Aileen, smiling. "I give you permission to say what you like, and promise to take no offence."

"You and me were promised to be married," said Ned, quietly, "and it was the dream of my life to get you and make you happy. You can never know, Aileen, how much I thought of you."

"Oh, you used to tell me," she said, with a sly look and a pretty suffusion of color in her face.

"I didn't tell you the half of it," returned Ned, "because I couldn't; and I needn't begin to tell you now. All I can say is that I loved you in the past, and that I love you now; and it's because I love you, darlint, I am going to say this. I could never marry you, Aileen, except to take you to a comfortable home of your own, and, somehow, I feel that that will never be. Don't look at me like that,

darlint, it's myself that's sorer than you. I can't help it; maybe I'm not much of a man anyway; but I feel all crushed, and as if I couldn't be worth anything more in the world. And this is what I have to say, Aileen—that you'll give me up. When you and me made it up first, you had lots of sweethearts; any of them would think themselves in heaven to get you yet. Give me up, Aileen, and take the one you like best of them. Because I'm ruined that's no reason why you should be ruined with me. If you promise me this, I won't feel so bad; only I wouldn't like to see you marrying Tim O'Keefe."

The girl had listened to all this with a bent head. When Ned stopped, she looked up with a faint smile, but at sight of the gravity of his countenance her smile died away.

"Ned," she answered, and there was a touch of severity in her tone, "I cannot help thinking you value me very lightly, when you think I could change from one to another like that."

Ned drew her arm more closely within his own.

"Don't say that," he pleaded, "don't say that, Aileen."

"Well, don't you say the other thing, then," returned Aileen.

"It was only because I can't make you happy myself, that I said it," he answered eagerly.

"So you would make my poor liking a thing of sunshine only," said Aileen. "Ned, Ned, you hurt me sore."

"Forgive me then, darlint," said Ned, penitently, "and I'll not speak another word about it."

"Nor about the other thing?" said Aileen, quickly.

He answered nothing, but bent and kissed her; and they walked on in silence till they were close upon the house.

"Aileen," said Ned then, "don't be saying a word to my mother or anybody."

"No, Ned," answered Aileen, "I will keep your secret. No one shall have a word from me."

## CHAPTER XX.

AFTER that confidence with Aileen, which his anger had brought on in spite of himself, Ned cast off the elaborate mask he had worn, and gave those who would free opportunity to look upon him as he really was, a dark, bitter, brooding, petulant, passionate man. It was not in his nature to be deceitful, and even the well-meant piece of hypocrisy he had practised had gone so sorely against his gorge that it was a positive relief to appear as he felt. There was no more boisterous merriment or zealous activity, or eager seeking of company.

"What's the use of keeping up the miserable farce any longer?" he asked of himself. "There's no use hiding from them what I can't drive from my mind. I'm ruined. No play-acting will get me over that—and I'll be revenged on them that did it, and I don't care who knows I mean it."

The change in Ned's demeanor, coming so suddenly and unexpectedly, threw Mrs. Blake into fresh fear and anxiety.

"He'll go and do something," she would moan to Aileen and Dennis by turns, "an' he'll be hanged as so many more that have been driv mad have been. Oh, worra! worra! that ever him or me was born!"

Then as her strength began to decline under the strain of sleepless nights and racking days, she would sit mutely in the old brooding attitude, rarely addressing anyone, and speaking with an effort when anyone addressed her. Ned was touched when he was in her presence; for her eyes

and posture said things the tongue could never have uttered, and over and over again he vowed to smother the fire that was burning in his heart, only to find himself impotent when he passed out of her sight and took to reviewing his situation.

Old Dennis, too, marked the change in the young man, and had his own thoughts. None knew better than he whither Ned was tending, nor how futile private wrath is against public power.

"I have been through it all," he would say to himself with tragic calmness. "I have been through it all, an' I have seen others go through it too, an' never yet wan that conquered. God save him an' us."

Dennis had a strong affection for Ned. Long ago he had liked him for a certain sturdy independence, and a nature as open and transparent as a summer sky; and later on, when he marked the bent of his daughter's affections, the young man's steadiness and industry had pleased him.

In those moments of looking before, which are common to old age, and perhaps to young age as well, Dennis had comforted himself with the reflection that when his time came, he should leave the daughter he loved as the apple of his own eye, in the keeping of a man whom he trusted. But that prospect, like so many others which had pleased him, was gone.

One faint hope indeed remained; a hope which, to many, might seem strong and reasonable, but which did not inspire Dennis with any cheerfulness or confidence. Aileen had once, in a very confidential talk with her father, hinted of her plan regarding the succession in Ferndyke. Dennis had listened without expressing any definite opinion of his own, in hope that that vague future which is so favorable a time for the settlement of our difficulties with us all, might bring some unexpected turn of the wheel of fortune. Now it occurred to him, seeing how

his daughter's affections were fixed, to speak to Ned about it, much as he would speak to one who was already Aileen's husband. He made the proposition as he thought delicately and deftly, and it was promptly declined; not haughtily or with any show of wounded pride, but simply as a flat impossibility.

"I will never forget your kindness," said Ned, "but it cannot be, and please do not press me."

"And what is to become of Aileen?" asked the old man directly.

Ned considered for a little, his eyes on the ground, his face very grave and white.

"If they left me Aileen," he said at length, with a spark of passion, and, as it might have seemed, a little illogically, "I wouldn't care. I wish I could tell you what is to become of her. God knows that's what makes my heart sore,—what's to become of her. I wish she would only listen to what I say. I have asked her to give me up. I would go away out of her sight, Misther McCarthy. It's not right, I know, that I should keep a girl like Aileen hanging on to me—not right at all. But I'll get out of her way. Yes I will, and then she can marry one of the many that's dying to get her, and I want you, Misther McCarthy not to be angry wid me for all the trouble I have brought on you and her. Before God I declare I couldn't help it. I would rather die than bring one hour's unhappiness to Aileen. You will believe me, won't you, when I say that?" And so the interview ended.

When it was over, the old man walked out into the fields with a weary weight at his heart, wondering what was to be done, and where it would all end. Keenly, keenly, he felt all these anxieties, coming upon him as they did when his strength was all spent, and his spirit like a broken bow.

After walking about for some time he sat down on a stone, put his elbows on his knees, and buried his face in his hands.

He had sat in this posture for some time, when Aileen came suddenly upon him. He heard her and looked up while she was still some yards off.

"Dear father," she cried, with a note of alarm, "what is the meaning of all this?"

"You are all I have, Aileen, an' you are going to be took from me like the rest," he answered quietly.

"My father what makes you say that?" asked the girl peering affectionately into his face.

"You needn't be askin' that. I know what's in Ned's heart better than you do, better maybe than himself, an' I know only too well what it will all come to. I'll lose you, Aileen, that's what it'll all end in,"

"You know father that I love you, and it hurts me to hear you say that."

"Oh, Aileen, *colin mo chree*, if you could only give him up. If you could only do that, my ould age would be the happier. Wanst I thought if you an' him was married I could die content, but that drame's gone wid so many others. Can't you give him up, my daughter?"

Aileen stared at her father, unable to answer. Divided as she was in her affections what could she do. She loved her father and she loved Ned, and could as much give up the one as the other.

"You don't answer, Aileen," cried the old man, divining her thoughts, with the quick intuition of despair. "You cannot answer. I know you. You won't tell a lie, and you cannot say 'yes.' Oh, my daughter, my daughter, it will kill me, that's what it will do." He stroked her soft cheek with his gnarled, palsied hands, and the tears stood in his eyes. "I thought I'd get kapin' you anyway, Aileen," he went on pathetically. "I thought that after all the troubles I have passed through in my younger days, that my ould age would be left alone. Aileen, can't ye give him up? he has axed ye to do it himself."

"Father dear," answered Aileen, with that reassuring

manner she hardly ever lost, "you have been thinking too much of this, and have made pictures for yourself which are far worse than the reality. Ned will get over his anger, I know he will. They have treated him most shamefully, and it would not be in human nature to go about just as if nothing had occurred; but he is devoted to his mother; and I—I believe I have some influence over him and his mother, and I will be able to put him all right yet."

"Ned will never be right again in this world," he answered. "Never, Aileen, an' don't you be chatin' yerself by thinkin' it. Oh, my swate *cailin*, it kills me entoiirely to think of what will become of you when your ould father's not here to see you. Can't you give him up, Aileen, as he wants ye to do? Say you can, Aileen—say you can, my daughter."

The old man's voice was husky; and tears rolled freely down his rugged cheeks. Aileen wiped them away, while she struggled to keep back her own.

"Father," she said in her softest tones, "I know you would be the last person in the world to keep back your hand where you could help, or to ask anyone else to keep back. If I was to take Ned at his word now, it would drive him headlong to his ruin."

"Ah, Aileen, by the time he has forgotten his anger we may all be out of this. But you're very good, Aileen. It's your goodness that does it, an' I would like to see Ned well, if we could put him right—yes—yes, surely I would. But it's a hard risk, Aileen—an' I'm so feared of losing you. Howsomever, work wid him, if you like."

The girl reached forward and pressed a grateful kiss on the old man's cheek, then rose to her feet, smiling radiantly through tears.

"Shall we go home now?" she said.

"Yes, yes, we'll go home," answered her father, rising slowly to his feet; and they walked away together.

Sorrow draws to sorrow by natural affinity. After that Dennis and Mrs. Blake were more together than before, striving to comfort each other, and only succeeding in adding to each other's wretchedness. They seemed to be living under the shadow of some impending catastrophe, of the nature of which they could form no conception.

Ned, singularly quick in all his perceptions, could not fail to notice how it went with the old folks though they strove to hide their apprehensions from him, and he condemned himself for his want of buoyancy and cheerfulness.

"I will bury my hatred," he would say to himself. "Yes, I will bury it. What are my wrongs weighed against the lives and happiness of them that's dear to me?" But when he came to make the effort—that is, when he thought of his wrongs alone—he found himself strangely impotent. He seemed to be all changed. His power of volition had left him. One thought, one purpose, refused to be driven from his mind; and, though he could resolve, he could not execute.

"Aileen," he said abruptly, one day, "am I very much changed, from what I used to be?"

"Why, Ned?" said Aileen, with a smile, "are you afraid you are losing your good looks? I suppose you want me to begin and go over your good points, one by one, admitting that you are as dangerous to the girls as ever. But I won't do it, and you needn't expect it. I don't like vanity, Ned."

"Come, Aileen, don't be teasing me," he responded. "If I ever had vanity—and maybe I had—it's all gone now. But every time I look at my own mother or your father, and every time I catch them looking at me, I feel somehow as if I was stabbing them. Is there something dreadful about me?"

"Well, to tell you the honest truth, Ned," answered Aileen gravely, "I have seen you gayer and readier with



your joke for all that; and then you are so ready to break out into those fits of anger now, oh—yes, even with me, and you needn't be denying it, and these spurts of anger are not a bit like the good-natured Ned we all used to know. The fact is, I believe the poor old folks are half afraid of you; they don't know what to make of you; and think that perhaps they don't treat you properly, some way or other. Will you promise me one thing?"

"It's hard to refuse you, Aileen, and you know it."

"There now, I'm not fishing for compliments. I'm too old and sober to have my head turned, now. You have turned it once, already, and that's enough. Will you promise one thing, or will you not? Just as you like, you know."

Her tone was bantering, her eyes were full of mischief, and there were dimples in her cheeks that reminded Ned of other days.

"I will promise you anything, Aileen," he answered, seizing her hand rapturously.

"Sure?"

"Sure."

"No matter how hard it is?"

"No matter if it was as hard as warming yourself at an iceberg."

"Now mind," and she raised her forefinger archly. "If you break this promise I will never, never, believe you again. Do you understand?"

"I understand."

"Well, then, listen with both ears:—promise to forget yourself just for one day. Never imagine there's such a being as yourself in the world at all."

He looked at her half in amusement—half in amazement.

"Forget myself, Aileen; and how could I be doing that?"

"There you are," cried Aileen, feigning vexation.

"Swearing to do whatever I asked you, and baulking at the first step. You're a fine fellow, aren't you? making a bargain with a girl, and going back on it the minute its made."

She drew herself up with an air of offence, laughing lightly. Very whimsical and enchanting she appeared; very unlike the girl whose mind was at that moment full of eagerness and trepidation and anxiety.

"I don't go back on my bargain," answered Ned seriously. "Only you have asked me to do a thing that I don't know how to begin. I don't know how to begin to forget myself."

"Oh Ned, Ned! I didn't think you were such a gosssoon," laughed the girl. "Will you stick to your promise if I tell you how?"

"I will."

"And no excuses or nonsense?"

"No."

"Well, you say you scare your mother and my father every time they look at you, and that's because your face is always dark and angry-looking now. All you have to do is to try for one whole day to please them, think of nothing else. If you don't like the work at the end of that time, I'll not ask you to continue it. The best way to begin would be by getting a pleasant smile into your face. Let me see you smiling."

Ned grinned from ear to ear like a Christy minstrel.

"Not like that, you monkey; gently, you know, as if you laughed because you were pleased yourself, and not because you meant to make others laugh, for you must hide your intention. Oh, that will never do," cried Aileen, laughing merrily, "that's like a Methodist spinster that's threatened with a lover."

At last Ned fairly forgot himself and burst into a ringing peal of laughter.

"That will do," cried Aileen. "Ned, that's the first

time you have really laughed since you came to Ferndyke. I wish those two old people heard it. It would make them laugh too."

It was, as Aileen said, the first time that Ned had laughed from the heart, since his release from prison, and the effect to himself was as though he had suddenly wakened from a dull, oppressive nightmare.

He went about the fulfilment of Aileen's behest with a humorous enjoyment, that was the best evidence of his sincerity. When night came and Aileen interrogated him as to his success, he was able to report that not only had he brought comfort to the old couple, but that he had really succeeded in forgetting himself.

"And can't you do that every day?" asked Aileen.

"I will try," answered Ned. "I know it would be best for me."

Aileen had a gleam of happiness, for Ned was in the right way, if he could only be kept on.

## CHAPTER XXI.

IF he could only be kept on ! If he could by an effort of volition have blotted out the past with all its maddening injuries, its unavenged, unrighted wrongs he would have done it without hesitation. He would have foregone the gratification of revenge and been content to see his enemy triumphing. But we cannot do as we would. We forget when we should remember, and remember when we should forget ; and not one of us, by taking thought, can pluck out a disagreeable memory.

Aileen's plan of inducing self-forgetfulness succeeded for a time, succeeded while it was novel, and the carrying out of it yielded amusement. When the occupation of pleasing others ceased to amuse himself, then it became irksome and demeaning. In the privacy of his own room and his own heart Ned soon realized that the present attempt to fly from himself, like the previous one, was a dismal and pitiful failure. No man was ever more eager to keep his life fresh and intact than he. His frantic spasms of resolution indeed, had a pitiable resemblance to the struggles of a dying man who feels his life ebbing irrevocably away, and yet refuses to bow to the inevitable, fighting with his feeble strength against what is predestined to conquer. Ned could not drive that haunting darkness from his mind : he could not forget that he was the crushed victim of a cruel system of oppression and extortion or that he was living by eleemosynary aid, though to remember was to forfeit every prospect that lay before him. Had his in-

instincts been less noble, had his affections been less warm his outcast state might have troubled him less. His pride would not have made alms bitter, his ambition would not have prompted him to deeds of reprisal : he would have gone along like a beast or a bird, snatching a mouthful here and another there, and trusting with a cheerful spirit to luck or chance for further favors. There are Irishmen, many of them, according to some accounts, who would be perfectly ready to barter their grievances for the charity that was offered to Ned, but he was not one of them. He had not a touch of the vagabond in his nature ; and felt, once for all, that a continuance of the life he was now leading was flatly impossible. But what was he to do ? what should he try next ? Should he quietly leave the country, or should he remain to feed fat the grudge he bore the agent of the Kilgroom estate ? He could not decide. But a little variety, a little excitement, were necessary to keep him from going mad. He craved the companionship of his fellows as he had never craved it before—nay he must have it ; and so one evening towards sunset he announced his intention of walking down to Dunbriggan to see what was going on. His mother and Aileen were not without apprehensions, though both thought it wiser to make no objection to his going down ; only his mother begged him at least a dozen times not to stay late ; and promising that he would not, he left.

He bounded down the hill-side with a wild sense of freedom that almost startled himself—was he glad of being rid of all restraint ? Was this gleeful feeling that was taking possession of him a license of revolt ? He knew not. He only was conscious of a strange exultation, like what one might feel who was at length bent on the execution of some project that had long occupied his mind.

On reaching the highway he stood for a little to look about him, then turned and walked at a swinging pace towards Dunbriggan. He had not gone far when a car

overtook him. Following the usual rural custom, he turned to look at it, and saw Mr. Wheelan and Tim O'Keefe, with two policemen carrying their rifles at the ready. Wheelan took no notice of him, but Tim O'Keefe honored him with a nod and a smile of derision. A sudden feverish flush came over Ned. He felt his blood leaping madly in his veins, and a stinging pain shot through his throat and chest. The car passed on swiftly and was out of sight in a minute, but the vision of those upon it remained with Ned.

"I wish I had five minutes of each of them by themselves," he said to himself, viciously. "Oh the cowards, wid their police and their baynits." He strode on with a quickened, agitated step. Many people accosted him as he went along. Some charitably stopping him to assure him of their sympathy in his misfortunes, but he made those pauses as brief as possible, for something was urging him desperately to make haste. The old passions were aflame within him.

"I will search him out," he kept saying to himself. "I will stand face to face wid him, and see what he has to say for all his dirty work. I will find him if I have to search the whole night. I will."

The early autumn dusk was already falling as he entered the town of Dunbriggan and took his way up the street. He had no definite idea of destination; he had no definite idea of anything—except that burning purpose of finding Wheelan.

The interruptions were more frequent now than they had been in the open country. He marvelled at the number of sympathizers and well-wishers he had, though, had he been as clear-sighted as usual, he might have detected two quidnuncs for every genuine friend. His manner became warmer with each conversation, for those to whom he talked did not consider it their duty to lessen the enormity of his wrongs. It added to his heat, too, that the

police eyed him suspiciously ; and once when two constables deliberately wheeled about and followed him, his exasperation was so great that, but for the opportune appearance of some one he knew, he might have challenged them to a pitched battle. When he stood to talk, the constables passed on with an insulting look, and Ned scowled defiantly back at them.

"Come to The Shamrock," said his friend, noticing how things were, "we can talk better there."

Ned demurred at first. He remembered his promise to his mother, and apprehended that once within the social influence of The Shamrock he might unduly prolong his stay. But another patrol coming up and looking at him, as though he were a ticket of leave man, his anger mastered his scruples and he accepted his friend's invitation.

The Shamrock was full, and Ned noted that the company evinced signs of excitement. Pat O'Shea, the Irish-American, who had planned the rescue on the day of the political meeting, was on his feet, and it was clear he had been making an oration. When he saw Ned he beamed, and held out his hand.

"Oh, be the powers ! Ned Blake !" he called, "Come in Ned, come in. Yer a sight for sore eyes ; thought you had shipped out west across the briny. Well, Ned, what is it to be ? I'm treating to-night, and you can have anything you like from a cock-tail to pop. Mrs. Muroon, will you see that Ned gets what he likes."

In a minute more Ned was seated in the midst of the company with a generous glass of whiskey punch before him. A sort of dare-devil recklessness had replaced his anger, and he was laughing and cracking jokes as though he had never known a trouble in his life. At first he avoided talking of himself or his grievances, feeling the repugnance of all proud souls to having his private affairs discussed in public. But when his glass had been re-

plenished once or twice by direction of Pat O'Shea, he became less discreet, and was easily led to talk of all that had happened to himself and those near to him ; and to talk of it loudly and vehemently.

"It's what I call a darned, blazing shame," remarked Pat O'Shea, as Ned paused to take breath and empty his glass. "Here, Mrs. Muroon," to the beaming landlady, "repeat the dose, if you please. It's a darned, blazing shame," he repeated, turning back to Ned. "But that's what comes of living anywhere but under a republic. I'll tell you what it is, the whole lot of ye, yer a pack of spiritless, down-trodden slaves—that's what ye are, and no squirmen' will make ye out anything else. I have been all over the States, north, south, east and west, and I declare to you, gentlemen—Mrs. Muroon, here are two empty glasses, repeat the dose please—I declare to you, gentlemen, I have seen more oppression and tyranny, and downright square misery in and about this little town of Dunbriggan within the past few weeks than I saw all the time I was in the States. Another brandy cock-tail, Mrs. Muroon, if you please. The American people wouldn't stand it. They would soon put the kibosh on your landlords and agents. There, if a man don't do what's fair and square, he mighty soon finds himself holding the wrong mule by the tail—Mrs. Muroon, another mug of stout, please. To give you only one instance. About this time last year a fellow out in Bute, Montana, tried on some of yer crooked Irish landlord dodges, claiming what wasn't his. Well, there was a meeting, and the result was that he got fifteen minutes to vamose the ranch—one man sitting with a watch, counting time, and another man standing with a Colt's revolver cocked and ready to shoot. My dear Mrs. Muroon, you are really very negligent, here are two gentlemen with empty glasses—punch, I think—yes, punch—well, fill them up, Mrs. Muroon—if you had only a taste of Montana whisky—it's the scorcher—men tone



down on vitriol when they want to lay off for a while. But as I was saying, gentlemen, the American people wouldn't stand it nohow—no, siree. If evictions were tried on them like they are here, the sheriff and his posse would be hung up to dry to the branches of the nearest tree. And then look at your priests—arrested in their pulpits. Father O'Halloran has this day been sentenced to six months with hard labor—for what? Gentlemen, you ought to blush with shame when you hear it—for saying that the tenants were paying too much rent, and for speaking at a political meeting and showing hospitality to an American tourist. Gentlemen, is this a free country, or is it not? Mrs. Muroon, another Collins, if you please—you know how to make it. Gentlemen, are you serfs or are you free-men—which do you call yourselves? I tell you what it is, if one of our clergy was to be taken like that for only speaking for the people, and attending political meetings, and entertaining strangers, my hooky! wouldn't there be a rumpus! Prison walls fifty feet thick wouldn't keep him in. No, siree, nor all the warders and policemen in the United States. And yet, gentlemen, you never think of lifting a finger. That's not how we behave in the States to them that help us. We would have a band organized before you could wink, almost, and have him out. Now, here's Father O'Halloran to be taken away this night. If he was in the States he shouldn't go, that's all.

The orator paused to moisten his throat. Every eye was fixed on him, and some men who had been smoking, forgot to pull at their pipes in the excitement.

Mr. O'Shea rose when he had emptied his glass, and looked over the company significantly. "Well, what's it to be?" he said.

Simultaneously, half a dozen men drained their glasses at a gulp, and jumped to their feet. Among the number was Ned Blake. His cap was thrown back, letting his

curling hair fall over his forehead, his eyes were glowing, and his well knit athletic frame was all aquiver.

"What would be done in America should be done in Ireland," he declared, recklessly. "Father O'Halloran is suffering for us and the likes of us. Here I am widout house or home or anything else in the world, and there's more here like me. If they're ready I'm ready. We cannot lose anything when we haven't got anything to lose. Father O'Halloran should not leave Dunbriggan."

The foolish speech of a man heated with excitement, and whisky punch.

Pat O'Shea smiled grimly.

"Do you really and truly mean a rescue?" he asked.

"And why not?" said Ned.

"And why not?" said several others in chorus. By this time the entire company was up—save one individual. This man had sat throughout the entire proceedings in an obscure corner, pulling alternately at a big pipe and a pot of ale, and taking no part, and apparently no interest, in the discussion. But when the resolution to rescue Father O'Halloran had apparently become final, he emptied his pot of ale, rose quickly, and strode towards the door. Something in his appearance or manner—some sinister look or unguarded movement, struck Pat O'Shea, who stepped alertly between the man and the door. The tactiturn stranger drew himself up with a look of surprise and offended dignity.

"What does this mean?" he demanded.

"Where are you going?" demanded Pat O'Shea in turn.

"If I thought you had any right to ask I might tell you," returned the unknown. "But since we are strangers to each other and this is a public place, free to all who pay their scores and act becomingly, I must really decline."

"You are fond of pretty speeches, I can see that," said Pat O'Shea, never yielding an inch. "But you ain't going

to sneak away like that without showing your colors ; not by a darn sight."

"I demand that you instantly stand aside, sir, and let me pass on," said the man growing angry, and then, to Mrs. Muroon, as Pat still held the passage, "Madam, I must request you to use your authority, and let a stranger pass out of your house unmolested."

"It's no use, I tell you," said another man, planting himself beside Pat. "You have heard things that maybe you shouldn't have heard."

"That's your look out, not mine," replied the stranger, with a sneer. "Loose tongues are apt to make suspicious minds."

"Just so," said Pat O'Shea, calmly, "and seeing that we have gone and let you into our secrets, it's only fair, you know, you should reciprocate a bit. Blame me, if you didn't sit there so quiet and foxey among them shadows that we quite overlooked your presence. We're not unreasonable. All we want is that you will keep all this dark—sing mum as if you hadn't heard a word."

Just then a third man, who had been eying the stranger closely, stepped suddenly up and peered closer.

"Be the powers, now, if I weren't right after all," he exclaimed excitedly. "I couldn't believe me eyes it was him ; but it is him, just him, and sorra a wan else, now that I see him better. This man's an ould Peeler," he said, turning to the company at large. "Faix, it's good cause I have to know him, too, for he runned me in wan night in the streets av Tralee, and swore next morning I was dead drunk, when I had only a thimbleful. Oh, be the powers, an' this is just me gintleman."

With that there arose a great commotion ; some clamoring that the man was a detective in plain clothes, and others urging the expediency of "clooving" in his head, no matter what he was, pending further investigation. The detective, for such the man really was, fearing a taste of

Jedburgh justice, made a dash for the door, but Ned Blake, springing with the alertness of a tiger, brought him to the floor, and rolled heavily on the top of him. Other men pressed round gesticulating and shouting, and Mrs. Muroon, apprehending bloodshed, began to scream at the pitch of her voice. The next minute three or four policemen rushed in, caught Ned and the detective and dragged them both into the street. A crowd speedily gathered who showed no manner of hesitation in taking the part of Ned, and as reinforcements came to the police, a desperate fight ensued. The Royal Irish are good hands at a row. Not only did they hold Ned, but succeeded in taking others of the more aggressive spirits as well; and were steadily, if slowly, making way with their prisoners to the barrack. At sight of the ominous building the crowd held back as though half deciding to let Ned and his companions remain in the clutches of the law; but as it wavered, a voice shouted lustily, "rescue, rescue," and the people, half ashamed of their momentary hesitation, rushed more furiously than ever on the police, and despite the terrific playing of bludgeons, knocked them about like nine-pins, and made off triumphantly with their prisoners. A scene of great noise and confusion followed. The people ran shouting and yelling derisively, with the police in hot pursuit; then after a little the crowd scattered, every man thinking only of his own safety, and doing his utmost to secure it.

Ned Blake, who was one of the fleetest of the multitude, presently found himself in a quiet back street with only one man running after him. Ned glanced back and perceiving that the man did not wear uniform, naturally took him for a friend, and stopped. The man ran on without speaking, making as though he would pass; but all at once he swerved, caught Ned by the legs and threw him violently to the ground.

"Caught at last," said the man, panting from want of

breath, and Ned recognized the voice of Tim O'Keefe.

With a mighty effort Ned shook himself free, rose, and was starting to run, when Tim again laid hold of his legs and brought him down. The two men rolled over each other on the road for a minute, then once more Ned got to his feet; but Tim's lusty arms were about him, and fight as he would he could not wrench himself free. Maddened beyond expression, Ned raised his clenched fist and dealt his adversary a blow that fell like the crash of a sledge hammer. Tim letting go his hold, caught his head in his hands, reeled and staggered for a second, then fell a limp and groaning mass in the road. Ned had no time to look whether or not he had killed Tim, for others came up and he was obliged to run.

"He has killed him," Ned heard voices say, "The devil a squawk's in him. Get a stretcher, quick."

Ned stopped to listen. He was chilled and sobered in a moment. What was this he had done? Had he committed murder? He had been a pauper before, he was an outlaw now. He started again, flying at his utmost speed along the street into a lane then across some fields and up the mountain side. He stood again on the edge of the wood partly to hearken, partly to recover breath. He could hear the tumultuous noises behind him, and here and there he saw glimpses of moving lights. He pressed his head with his hands as a sudden pain shot through it. What had he done? Was he really a murderer then?

"If you have killed it was in self defence," whispered a small voice within him. "In self defence," answered another and louder voice in ridicule, "a pretty tale that would be. You have killed a man who was assisting the police, and against whom you had a grudge. You shall be hanged, depend upon it. How do you like your revenge now?"

Then his brain reeled, and he was fain to sit down to keep from falling. What had he done? Oh! what had

he done ? What did all this tumult of emotion mean ? this jumbled up confusion of images and ideas ? Was he drunk ? yes, yes, surely he must be drunk, very drunk. He had been drinking at The Shamrock : he remembered that. But had he not dealt a murderous blow ? Had he not seen the man reel and fall, and had his blood not curdled at the sound of that death-groan ? No, he was not drunk. He was a murderer ; and the fresh realization of the fact brought beads of icy perspiration to his brow. Presently he rose, shaking in every limb, and staggered a little piece up the hill ; but his physical power was gone and he fell rather than sat down. Then he tried to think out all that had happened, but all else was blotted out of his mind by the one burning thought that he had killed Tim O'Keefe. He was a murderer, yes, that was what revenge meant. In a sort of lightning gleam the whole ghastly sequel flashed upon him—the arrest, the conviction, the dread, dishonored end, the ignominious memory—and he fairly moaned. Never till that moment had he valued life, never till that moment had his prospects seemed really blasted. Oh, for innocence ! what would he not have given for innocence !

He sat there for a long time trying to think out some way of self-deliverance ; but every avenue of his imagination led to one goal—the murderer's dishonored grave. Better have it over at once then, he thought in his despair. He would turn back and surrender himself, and plead guilty and have the ghastly ordeal over as quickly as possible. But no sooner was he on his feet, than his heart failed him, and instead of walking back he turned up the mountain side.

The moon rose solemnly from behind a ridge, as he went, bringing peaks and gorges and woods into clear visibility. How familiar the scene was ! and yet how fearfully changed ! He seemed to be dreaming about what he had once known, not actually walking in its midst.

He held on instinctively towards Ferndyke, but as he drew near he stopped in sudden panic. No, there could be no Ferndyke for him any more. No hospitable roof should ever receive him again; his own act made that impossible; and so he passed on to the mountain solitudes above, longing yet not daring to go and speak a word with those who were waiting for him.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

DENNIS and little Kathleen had retired to rest at the usual early hour, leaving Mrs. Blake and Aileen to await the return of Ned. A bright fire burned on the hearth, and the kettle depending from its cross-bar in the chimney, crooned cosily in anticipation of Ned's speedy appearance, as the two women drew their chairs closer in to enjoy the warmth. Mrs. Blake, as usual, evinced little disposition to talk, but Aileen was in her brightest mood, and seemed determined to make the time pass agreeably; and for a while she succeeded. But as the hours passed without bringing Ned, Mrs. Blake grew anxious and absent, frequently wondering, in her nervous tremulous way, what could be delaying him. Aileen made many plausible excuses. Ned had met some of his old friends and had been detained by them; perhaps he had gone home with one of them, and it was easy to understand how quick and unheeded time passed when young men, who had much to talk of, got together. Ned was in no mischief or trouble, Mrs. Blake might rest assured of that; and while Aileen was busy coining reasons for Ned's absence the clock struck eleven.

"Something's wrong wid him," cried Mrs. Blake, quite ignoring all that Aileen had been saying. "He'd hev been here by this time if all was right. He promised to be home early, an' Ned was always a boy that kept his promise to his ould mother. Oh, something's wrong I know. Worra, worra." And she began to rock herself to and fro as was her fashion when she was in deep distress.



Aileen tried to comfort and assure the elder woman, but as no notice was taken of what she said she presently fell silent, and all was dead still save for the solemn tick, tick, tick of the old eight-day clock. In this way the time passed till the clock, rousing itself for a great effort, rang out twelve with a sort of brazen alarm. Midnight, and Ned not home! The two women started and looked at each other as though they were surprised at the clock's announcement, when in fact they had been counting the minutes for the last hour: then they put shawls about their heads and went out.

The moon rode high and clear in the heavens, showing every object in the landscape, almost with the distinctness of day. They anxiously scanned the slopes below, and more than once fancied they saw some dark moving object, but always as they strained their eyes to make certain, it suddenly stood still, leaving them to conclude that the excited imagination had endowed a bush or the stump of a tree with powers of locomotion. The owls were calling and answering each other with dolorous noises in the woods below; somewhere above a dog was barking furiously as though it were on the heels of a burglar; but there was no sound of coming footsteps nor any appearance of a human being.

When presently they withdrew into the house again, the widow sat down in her chair, clasped her hands before her, and began to rock and moan.

"Oh, Mrs. Blake, you must not give way to that sort of thing," said Aileen. "You know it was late when Ned went down, and if he went home with some of his old companions, as I think he did, he has no more than time to be here yet;" and even while she spoke the old clock chimed one with startling clearness.

It seemed like the knell of all their hopes. Instead of answering Aileen, Mrs. Blake bent forward, covered her face with her hands, and burst out crying.

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trouble, and that that trouble—whatever it might be—had now overtaken Ned.

From that time until day began to glimmer through the windows the two women talked but little. Sometimes they would start up, fancying they heard approaching footsteps, then fall back with a word of disappointment as they found themselves mistaken, then again they would rise silently and go to the door and look out and return to their seats with a deepened expression of fear ; for even Aileen could not now help thinking that something serious had happened.

Dennis, who generally lay down and rose with the sun, found them still keeping watch in the kitchen when he came out of his room. Mrs. Blake got up at his entrance, and it seemed to Dennis she was not half her normal size.

"Och, Misther McCarthy, Misther McCarthy !" she cried, before Dennis could express his amazement at finding them still there. "It has come upon us at last ; the thing we were afraid of has come."

"What has happened ?" asked Dennis with a sort of premonitory shudder.

"Ned has never showed face since," answered Mrs. Blake, wringing her hands. "An' he must be dead or in jail, for nothing else would keep him away a whole night. Oh, worra, worra, that ever him or me was born."

Dennis looked at his daughter. She was standing with her hand on the back of a chair. Her night's vigil had left her face very white, and though her strong will enabled her to maintain an outward semblance of composure, a less penetrating eye than her father's could have detected her nervous tension.

"Mrs. Blake imagines the worst," she said in her usual quiet way. "There are many things that might keep Ned, and very likely he will be here before breakfast."

The old man's face fell. Well he knew she did not feel the confidence she tried to express.

"I hope so," he faltered, turning away, "I hope so."

He had come in with a tolerably firm step ; he went out like one suddenly smitten with the palsy.

"I knowed it," he groaned aloud when he was out of earshot. "I knowed it all the time. Oh, Aileen, my daughter, my daughter. Oh, why couldn't they let an ould man alone ?" he moaned, as he tried to go about his work. "Why must they come when my strength is all done an' put me down like this ?"

Dennis could see no gleam of hope in the situation. He knew enough of the spirit of young men, and of the passions and temptations to which Ned and the like of him were subject, to fear the worst. He knew, too, that so long as Ned was in life, Aileen would not abandon him. There was too much of the McCarthy blood in her veins for that.

"'Wait till he gets another start,'" he repeated to himself, going over Aileen's promise, "an' then, if you like, I will give him up.' Ay, ay, she will give him up when the grave receives him an' not a minute sooner ; an' God only knows what may happen afore that."

After what he had heard he was scarcely surprised to see two policemen coming towards the house as he went in to breakfast. He looked at them for a minute as though he had expected them, and then went slowly on to apprise Aileen of their approach. The blood went from the girl's face when she heard it, her heart beat wildly, and for a second everything whirled about her. But she controlled herself.

"Don't tell her," she whispered eagerly, meaning Mrs. Blake, "anyway till we see what they want," and then she stepped quietly out.

The two policemen were still some distance off, but there could be no mistaking their intention ; they were coming straight to Ferndyke. She leaned against a stack of peats, her breath coming hard and fast ; every fibre of her frame quivering. What terrible tidings had they to bring ?

What had Ned done? Was it all to end as her father and Mrs. Blake had so often prophesied?

Her father came out and walked a little distance to meet the two policemen; then when they came up she could hear them asking the fatal question: "Do you know anything of Edward Blake, late of Arraghlow, or is he at present concealed about the house?"

"He is not here," answered Dennis, in a quick, tremulous voice. "He was here some time ago, but I don't know where he is now."

"As he is wanted upon a serious charge," said one of the men, "I'm afraid we must take the liberty of searching the premises, Mr. McCarthy."

It was the Sergeant that Aileen had seen that Sunday night when she and Sandy McTear were looking for the Sub-Inspector.

"Oh, yes," said Dennis, "You can search the premises," and he turned and led the way into the house. Aileen was standing at the door when they came up.

"Good-morning, Miss," said the Sergeant, recognizing her.

"They want to search the house for Ned Blake, Aileen," said Dennis looking at her with an expression of great pain.

"He is not here," answered Aileen addressing the Sergeant. "You may believe me when I tell you, and please do not go in, for his mother is there. She doesn't know you are here, and if you went in to search for her son it would fairly kill her. It would indeed."

The Sergeant seemed to consider a moment, as though he were asking himself whether he could believe this girl, seeing she might be interested in concealing the man they sought.

"I am sorry I must," he answered at length, "Blake is wanted upon a serious charge, and I am bound to carry out my instructions in looking for him."

"What charge?" said Aileen, eagerly.

The Sergeant made a gesture as though he did not care to tell her.

"What charge?" she demanded again. "You must tell me what charge."

"If you must know," answered the Sergeant, "he is wanted for assault and battery, with intent to kill."

"With intent to kill," repeated Aileen, in a voice of terror.

"Not Wheelan, was it?" put in the old man. He was trembling with impatience, and quite unable to keep back the question.

The Sergeant looked at him in a way which said, "Oh, so you expected him to kill Wheelan, did you?"

"Not Mr. Wheelan," he answered, "but one very closely connected with him—the bailiff, Tim O'Keefe."

"By your leave, Miss," he said then, advancing a step.

"Yes, yes," said Aileen, dazedly, "you can go in. I would not have you think he was here."

The Sergeant walked in to make his search, while his comrade remained to keep watch outside.

As soon as Mrs. Blake heard the heavy tramp on the floor, she rushed out of the back room into which Aileen had inveigled her, expecting to see Ned. At sight of the policeman she stood for a moment unable to speak or breathe, then screamed and recoiled as though she had been struck a blow. The next minute, however, she was forward again and holding the Sergeant tightly by the arm.

"Tell me what it is!" she cried wildly, "tell me all!"

When the sergeant told her what he wanted, she turned quickly away with a look of inexpressible anguish.

"I'll never see him again," she said, while she almost choked. "I knowed I wouldn't."

"Don't say that, Mrs. Blake," cried Aileen, clasping the widow in her arms. "Sergeant," she said, turning to the

officer with pitifully appealing eyes, "Tim's not dead, is he?"

"No, he's not dead," answered the sergeant, touched with pity at the sight of the stricken mother.

"He's not dead, Mrs. Blake," cried Aileen.

"Ned's dead—dead to me an' everybody else," returned the widow in a hoarse whisper, and she spoke not another word.

The sergeant made his search as quickly and quietly and delicately as possibly and withdrew out of the house.

Outside he put some formal questions: Had Blake been staying there since his release from prison? When did he leave Ferndyke? What was his object in going down to Dunbriggan on the previous evening?

The questions were put to Dennis, but it was Aileen who answered.

"Edward Blake has been staying here since his release from prison," she said. "He went down to Dunbriggan, last evening with no other object but to see what was going on; and the fault must have been more Tim O'Keefe's than his." With which answers the policeman departed.

There had never been such a day as that at Ferndyke. Mrs. Blake sat like a helpless paralytic within, Dennis tottered about, little better than another paralytic without, and in Aileen's own soul there was the numbness of despair. All the former evils had been nothing to this. The others had been so many simple crosses, this was the cutting off of hope; there could be no happiness now.

Aileen wondered why Ned had not returned, if only for a minute, to tell her what had happened. Surely he might have trusted her. Perhaps he would come yet and give her an opportunity to counsel and help him. He was beyond all hope now, and never had she felt the same vehement desire to render him assistance.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

THE shadows lengthened, twilight fell and the dark night, and still Aileen went about with her terrible constriction of heart unrelieved. There had been no visitors at Ferndyke since the policeman had left, and there were no tidings of Ned.

Mrs. Blake had taken, or rather had been put to bed early in the day, helpless and moaning like one mortally crushed, and Dennis remained persistently outside, as though he did not care to have speech with any one; so that till little Kathleen's return from school, Aileen was alone. And it was very evident she preferred being alone, for as soon as the frugal supper was over and her father settled in his corner by the fire to take his usual evening smoke, and Kathleen at her lessons, she stole quietly out for further self-communion. The sun had not been long down, and not many stars were in the sky, but the evening star—the star of peace and rest, which she had so often watched with a fascination she but half comprehended, was burning above her with its own peculiar lustre and softness. Though the lower world was in darkness, there was a vague mystical light in the zenith by which she could make out that, away up there, the clouds were moving swiftly as if a smart wind blew. About her, however, the air was perfectly still.

She walked on a little distance to a stile in a fence enclosing the upper fields, and there sat down. She had come out for a greater freedom of thought, and now she

seemed to have nothing definite to think about. It seemed as though her mental machinery had got hopelessly entangled and refused to obey her will. But if she could not think she could feel, and her feeling was one of utter loneliness and desolation.

She sat for a while, her head bowed, her hands on her face, then suddenly, as if in obedience to some swift impulse, she sat erect and gazed at the sky. What thoughts were in her heart I know not, for not a syllable came from her lips; but as she looked the tears fell, a sight that may not have been ungrateful to some watching angel.

It was the first time since the beginning of all these troubles, that Aileen had freely wept, but the poor heart could hold out against its natural inclination no longer.

She sat on. The wind that had been away up in the zenith made its way down and fanned her cheek, and playing caressingly with the tendrils of her hair. It blew from the south and was full of the balm of favored regions far away. Ah! the wind that blows where it listeth, and sees so much, if it had the power of speech what tales it could tell! How many forlorn maidens watching in gleeful hope or sad despair does it kiss and fondle in one night! How many tears does it help to dry, how many burning brows to cool! When it blows softly, making the tree-tops its lyre as though an Orpheus lodged in every bough, is it because it is affected by the songs of joy it hears? When it rushes with a flying shriek, is it because it is frantic with wails of misery?

When Aileen's mind became clearer and calmer, she thought Ned might have come to tell her what had happened to him. Yet she would not accuse him, for doubtless he had found it impossible to come to her. She did not know how he had been situated. She might conjecture. It was easy to conjecture. It was easy to see *why* he should have been more attentive to her, it was less easy to see *how* he could have been. Ned was in trouble;

none could know his difficulties but himself. No, no, she must not doubt Ned, especially at such a time as this. And, while she was full of these thoughts, the moon rose, and the darkness fled, none could say whither. And then suddenly a sound fell upon her ear, the sound of crackling twigs.

She sat up instantly, alert and panting, and bent her ear to harken ; but the sound had stopped. What could have done it ? Perhaps some marauding cat or dog now standing in fear of discovery. Presently she heard the sound again on the other side of the quick-set hedge. The next instant Teagh was bounding across the open space, barking furiously. She heard some one speaking in a low voice, as though to propitiate the dog, and Teagh was immediately leaping and yelping with delight. Aileen rose with a tumultuously beating heart, and stepped into the open ground. The dog and the man saw her simultaneously, and both came forward.

"Ned," she cried, running to meet them.

"Aileen."

The shock of meeting seemed to deprive both Ned and Aileen of all power of speech for the space of several minutes. Then, as if it were only a trivial and casual meeting, Ned asked Aileen why she had been prowling about in the moonlight alone ; and Aileen, as if she had been keeping a tryst, answered that she had been waiting for him.

"Waiting for me," said Ned, in a tone of light banter. "You didn't expect to meet me, did you?"

"I did."

"Why?"

"Oh, I knew you would come."

Then a sibilant sound and another spell of silence.

"Has there been anybody here, Aileen?" asked Ned, after a considerable pause, "anybody looking for me I mean?"

The girl's face was overcast. She caught the lapel of Ned's coat, fingering and turning it nervously.

"Yes, there's been somebody here," she answered, in a low voice.

"The police?"

"Yes."

"Did they tell what they wanted me for, Aileen?"

"For doing something to Tim O'Keefe," answered Aileen, trying to veil the harshness of the fact.

"For killing him, was it that?" demanded Ned.

He was holding her arm with a hard, nervous grip.

"No, not for killing him," answered the girl; "it's not so bad as that, Ned."

"I thought I had killed him—I'm sorry I didn't; it would have served him right."

"Oh, don't say that, Ned," ~~pleaded the girl~~. "Don't wish to have ~~things~~ worse than they are."

"~~Wait~~ till I tell you, Aileen, and then see if he didn't deserve a blow that would kill him. I was in The Shamrock, and some noise got up about rescuing Father O'Halloran, and then the police came, and there was a row. They're ag'in me, you know, and wanted to put me in jail again, because I was in this row. Well, the boys they took me and the others from the police, and we ran for all we were worth. I soon left everybody behind but one ~~man~~, and seeing he was not a peeler, I thought he was a friend ~~and~~ stopped; and all at once he darted at my legs and threw me; and when I tried to get up and run away he hung on to me, and I hit him and down he went, and I'm sorry he's not dead."

"No, Ned, you are not," replied Aileen, taking his arm. "And now come on, for you are all wet. Where have you ~~been~~ all the time?"

"Up there," he answered, indicating the mountains with a twist of his head.

"Well, come on, you're cold and hungry."

But Ned hesitated.

"I don't know that it's safe, Aileen," he said. "They'll be looking for me sure, and will be back here. I don't want to get ketched, if I can help it."

"I'll keep watch," said Aileen. "No one will get you here. Come along."

"All right ; I'll go."

Before they reached the house, however, Aileen stopped.

"Your mother has been kind of upset to-day," she said, "and it might not be good for her if you were to walk in suddenly. Suppose you stay outside for a minute till I break the news to her."

Ned assented, and Aileen slipped quietly into the house. Her father was crouching over the fire, with his elbows on his knees, and his unlighted pipe hanging loosely between his teeth. Aileen went up to him softly.

"Father, why are you not smoking," she asked.

"Och, why," said the old man, looking up at her. "Aileen," he added, with a sudden energy, "you are smiling, *me cailin*, what has happened ?"

"Ned's outside," whispered Aileen, "and perhaps you would go out and speak to him ; but keep quiet, don't let his mother hear till I tell her in my own way."

"Yes, I'll go out," said Dennis rising to his feet. "I'll go and spake to him, Aileen."

When the two men were face to face they stood looking at each other, as though neither of them had the use of his tongue. The old man was the first to speak.

"This is a kind av meetin' I didn't expect, Ned Blake," he said.

He had meant to speak kindly to this unfortunate young man, but in spite of himself a strain of asperity and reproach got into his voice. Perhaps he would have been more than human if he had been able to speak quite pleasantly.

"It is a kind of meeting I expected just as little as you,

Misther McCarthy," answered Ned, his pride all at once in arms, "and, believe me, I would not willingly force it on you."

There was an awkward pause. Each was conscious of having said—not by word, but by tone—precisely the thing he had meant not to say.

"It's a sore, sore business, anyway," said Dennis at length, speaking as much to himself as to his companion.

"It is," said Ned, promptly. "But, Misther McCarthy, do not be thinking that I'm coming to trouble and torment you again. I'm now what you must have foreseen what I was coming to, an outcast and—and an outlaw—there's no use mincing things. But I'm not going to drag you down along wid me. If I am to go down, I will go down alone. I know what I have done and the consequence. I know that I have already brought shame and suspicion on your house; but I will not do more than I have done. If I could wipe all that out, and make you all forget that I have ever lived, I would do it. You have been very kind and good to me, Misther McCarthy. I do not forget your kindness, and never will, wherever I go, and I'm going somewhere; and I'll never again come like an evil shadow about your house. Only I thought I might come back wanst more to see my mother and Aileen, and to bid them good-bye; and you, too, Misther McCarthy, I wanted first to see you all wanst more."

"It's Aileen," said the old man, keeping his eyes on the ground. "I don't care for myself. I'm nearly done wid the world, an' needn't care much what it does to me. But Aileen, wid you like this, Ned, an' me dead an' gone, what's to become of her?"

The young man bowed his head in silence, for he could make no answer. What, indeed, should become of her?

"I don't blame you, Ned," said the old man, noticing Ned's expression of pain. "You have had throuble enough to make you," 'a great deal deal worse than you

are,' he was going to say, but that would have implied too much, and so he said, 'angry.' "It has all come about as things do in this country, in spite of you."

Ned stepped quickly forward, caught the old man's hand and shook it.

"Thank ye for them words," he said, "thank ye. I'll not forget them."

He would have said more, but just then Aileen appeared and cut short his speech.

"I have told your mother you are here," she said to Ned, "and I think you may go in and see her now. I'll keep watch."

"No, no, Aileen," said her father. "Go you in too. I'll walk about here to see that nobody comes. I want a bit of fresh air, anyway."

"Come then, Ned," said Aileen, "and mind you must go as quietly and be as gentle as ever you can," and with that she turned and led the way into the house. In another minute she was back with her father.

"They are together," she said in answer to his look of interrogation, "and we'll leave them alone."

She took her father's arm; and the two walked back and forth in silence. Each being too full of thought to speak.

Suddenly they stopped as Kathleen came running out of the house screaming with fright. Aileen darted forward and caught the child in her arms. "What is the matter, Kathy?" she asked in alarm, "what has frightened you?"

"Mrs. Blake, Mrs. Blake!" cried the child, clinging to Aileen, and casting fearful glances behind her.

"Go to your grandpa," said Aileen quickly, as she heard a shriek from within. "There, he will take care of you;" and she hurried into the house. There, she saw a singular scene. In the middle of the kitchen floor stood Ned, his face convulsed with emotion, while his mother clung to him, crying out as if she were being killed.

"He cannot go," she called out, as Aileen entered.

"He must not go away. If he goes this time I'll never see him again."

Aileen advanced to try and soothe the stricken woman, whereupon Mrs. Blake waved her away with one hand, and clung the fiercer to Ned with the other.

"I know what you want," she screamed, "you want to take him from me so that I cannot see him any more, but I will not let you. No, no, where he goes I go, and if I stay here he stays too."

"Dear Mrs. Blake," said Aileen soothingly, "I do not want to separate you from Ned: far from it; only you will hurt yourself if you go on like that."

"An' what is the odds?" demanded Mrs. Blake in the same vehement voice, "what is the odds when he is wid me? Oh, my darlint boy, everybody is trying to hunt you an' hurt you, but your own mother will not leave you. No, darlint." She calmed suddenly down, and began to stroke her son's face and head as though he were still a baby.

Ned submitted to her caresses without a word, and she was comforted under the impression that she was imparting comfort.

A fresh idea occurred to Aileen.

"The night is chilly, Mrs. Blake," she said quietly, "and your clothing is so scant that you will be sure to catch cold if you do not put on more. I am going to make tea for Ned. Had you not better go and dress yourself and sit down with him?"

Mrs. Blake looked at Aileen with bright, piercing eyes as though to see whether her face confirmed her words, then unexpectedly showed signs of yielding.

"Will Ned not go away then—will ye not Ned?" she asked.

"No mother," Ned answered, "I will not go away. You and me will have our tea together."



"Very well, then, I will go an' dress," said Mrs. Blake. And she went.

"I had better go when she's out of the way, Aileen," whispered Ned.

Aileen considered a moment.

"No, no," she answered, earnestly, "we must keep our word to her. If she came out and found you away it would kill her on the spot." And as she said this the door opened and Mrs. Blake looked in, as though she had divined what was passing.

"Aren't you getting the tea ready?" she asked, seeing Aileen still standing idle.

"Yes," answered Aileen, proceeding to stir up the fire. "It'll be ready in a little."

Mrs. Blake again withdrew, but a few minutes later she returned with a big shawl about her, and took her place beside Ned, who was steaming himself before the fire.

"I'll stay beside ye," she said, "I like best to have me eyes on ye, Ned."

The table was set, and Aileen was just about to pour out the tea, when her father looked quietly in and beckoned to her. She made some excuse, rose and went out with a palpitating heart.

"Is that something down there be the pratie field?" said her father when she was outside, "or is it me eyes that's desavin' me?"

Aileen looked keenly in the direction indicated, and there, sure enough, were two black objects skulking along in the shadow of the hedge.

"Hush, not a word—just wait where you are," she said, hastily; and turned back into the house. "Mrs. Blake," she said with simulated cheerfulness, "I wish you would go into the other room there, while I pour out the tea—and get that gray overcoat for my father. The cold is beginning to tell on his rheumatism."

"So it will, so it will," said Mrs. Blake compassionately, rising and going for the coat.

"Ned," whispered Aileen, as soon as the old woman was out of the room. "The police are coming again. Run quick, and hide among the rocks near at hand where I can see you again. Don't lose a moment. Here, out through this back window."

In an instant Ned was out through the window, and running swiftly away, unseen of course, for the house stood between him and them that sought him.

Mrs. Blake was some time in finding the coat, and when she returned calling out in advance the trouble she had had, the policemen were in the kitchen. At sight of them she uttered a cry for Ned, and before any one could speak to her, staggered and fell on the floor. She was carried to her room and laid on her bed, where Aileen after a time succeeded in restoring her to consciousness. As soon as Mrs. Blake had recovered her senses Aileen returned to the kitchen.

"Blake has been here," said one of the policemen glancing at the table.

Aileen looked him unflinchingly in the face.

"He has," she answered.

"Where is he now?"

"I cannot tell you."

"We must search the house, then; and our orders are to watch it."

And after making certain that Ned was not concealed in the house, they withdrew to keep their watch.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

SANDY MCTEAR heard of the proceedings in Dunbriggan on the night of Ned's last visit to it with deep concern. Like some others he had been hoping, almost against hope, that affairs would take a favorable turn, that Ned's interests and ambitions would strike root afresh ; but this latest trouble had utterly dashed any such prospect.

"Puir Ned !" said Sandy to himself sorrowfully, ruminating on the tragedy of human life. "Puir Ned ! as generous a laddie as ever was born, and as good, though lively and fu' o' his daffin'. If his lines had been cast in other places, how different a' would have been, for he'd do well, if he only got half a chance. Losh ! just to think how he toiled and moiled on that bit croft trying to get craps out o' the very stanes, and how anxious he aye was to see his landlord paid, and now, that after a' his striving his hame's in ruins an' himsel an outcast. Ane would think sometime that the Almighty had created some fowk to be the sport o' ither fowk. Hech, hech, dear me ! There's something wrong surely, something very far wrong when a' this trouble can overtake them that's honestly trying to do well. I used to think the Irish were a set o' people that skrieghed at the scart o' a preen, but I'm cured o' that notion. In Scotland we have had our troubles too, and a gey peck o' them—Highland clearances and such other pliskies o' men in power and landed gentry—but we managed to put an end to thae things, anyway to the most

glaring o' them,\* but in this country oppression and slavery seem to grow the worse the longer they are let live, like the weeds in my auld gairden. What's an honest man to do? If the rent's paid regularly, or improvements made, it's a sure sign the rent's owre low, and some mair is clappit on, and if it's delayed because the land winna yield bushels o' gold, the tenants are lazy, malicious ne'er-do-weels, and as such have their hurdies turned bare to the wind. Ay, ay, it's sair on Ned, and sairer on Mrs. Blake, puir body!" Here an onlooker might have discovered something almost lackadaisical in Sandy. "I'd like to do something for her. Ah, dear me, it's a sad world, my masters, as the fellow in the play says."

But keenly as Sandy felt for Mrs. Blake and her son, and anxious as he was to express his sympathy, a certain delicacy, the existence of which would scarcely have been expected, kept him from intruding himself in the first spasm of this new sorrow. It was not till the morning of the third day after Ned's escapade, and when the suspense had become really insupportable, that he made up his mind to pay a visit of condolence, and discover for himself exactly how things were.

He rose early, for it was a difficult and tedious business getting into the sable suit, Blücher-boots, tall stock, and enormous collar in which it was his habit to visit houses of mourning. He began to dress at six, and considered he had lost no time when he was able to sit down to breakfast at eight. He ate lightly and with little relish, though Mrs. Muroon went to the trouble of frying two sausages of approved local manufacture, and a rasher of bacon, the mere flavor of which would have made most men begin anew after they had finished. Nor when he started did he walk with his usual buoyant, tripping step, but heavily and with frequent sighs. It did not require the sable suit,

\* I am not at all sure that Sandy's Celtic countrymen would echo this opinion, even though he should only be speaking comparatively.

and the frowsy tall hat, and the stiff black stock, to declare that Sandy was bent on a very painful mission.

About half way up he sat down on a stone, mopped his face and shining scalp, and tried to think of something appropriate to say when he should reach Ferndyke.

"It's likely they'll be a' greetin'," he said to himself. dolorously. "Hech, hech, dear me, it's a sair business. What can a man body do wi greetin' women fowk, anyway?" And without being able to think out any speech in the least satisfactory, he rose and resumed the climb.

As he approached the house, half resolving to turn, he saw Dennis working in a field, and made across to where the old man was. Dennis stared when he saw the black figure coming towards him, and continued staring until Sandy came up.

"Good-morning, Mr. McCarthy," said Sandy, throwing off his sad look. "I hope I have the pleasure of seeing you well, sir?"

Sandy was in the habit of addressing Dennis with that mixture of pity and respect which an active young fellow of fifty feels for a worn and decrepit old man of seventy.

"Purty well in body, thank ye, Misther McTear," answered Dennis, "though I can't be saying so much for me moind?"

"Ay, ay, nae doot there's a sair place there," said Sandy compassionately. "I have heard something. Nae doot ye feel it too."

Dennis nodded his head sadly.

"Come up to the house, Misther McTear," he said, after a pause.

"I—I'm not quite sure that I should trouble the fowk there," responded Sandy. "They'll maybe no be caring for veesitors."

"Oh, they're always glad to see you, Misther McTear," said Dennis. "Come along."

Sandy could not help stroking his chin, and smiling very quietly to himself.

"Weel, weel," he returned pliantly, "if ye think that, I'll e'en go."

"All them troubles is coming on me in me ould age," said Dennis, presently, in a querulous voice. "When I'm wake in meself, an' when there's none to help me but Aileen, an' her all took up wid Ned. You know how she's took up wid him, Misther McTear."

"Yes," said Sandy, "I've a notion how things are in that quarter."

"Aileen's a good girl, an' always was," said Dennis. "Still and all, them are things that a girl doesn't take her ould father's advice in. The young an' the ould don't look on the world wid the same eyes at all; and Aileen thinks she can do something for Ned in his troubles, but I know how it'll be, though I can't convince her. Sometimes I think my heart will clane break, Misther McTear, so full of trouble, an' not wan to spake to, for I can't tell her. It's an unfortunate thing, Misther McTear, that Ned Blake ever comed here, though I darsn't say so; an' indade he was a fine boy wanst, an' my heart feels right sore for him. He came here last night an' said he would niver come back again! but it's little odds whether he does or not, as long as he's alive. It's the sore trouble we have in this country, Misther McTear, especially wid a wife an' childer, an' its thankful ye ought to be ye don't know anything about it. I have had wife an' childer, an' they have all been took from me but Aileen, an' now she's goin' wid the rest. It's a cruel system that causes it all—that's all I can say."

"A system o' downright wickedness," said Sandy, hotly.

"It comes into our homes anyway, an' blasts an' ruins them," said Dennis, his voice more doleful than ever. "An' that's the worst thing that any system can do. Mrs. Blake, pore ould woman, is lyin' wid her heart broke."

"Nae doot the puir cretur feels this new trouble very much," said Sandy, trembling all over as he spoke.

"It's just kilt her," said Dennis, "that's what it has done."

"Killed her?" repeated Sandy in consternation. "Dear me, dear me!"

"Lestways it has put her she can't live long," said Dennis. "The breath's in her an' that's about all."

"God bless me!" ejaculated Sandy. "Eh, it's a cursed business this, anyway!"

They were now quite close upon the house, and Aileen, hearing their voices, came to the door. Her face was white and drawn, but her manner was composed as usual.

"I'm sorry to see ye look so ill, Miss McCarthy," said Sandy, coming up and taking her hand.

"It's not the looks one should care about, Mr. McTear," answered Aileen quietly. "I could wish I felt no worse than I look."

"Dear me!" said Sandy, "dear me! And her," in a subdued voice, "how is she?"

"Very nearly done with her trouble," replied Aileen, her face working in spite of all her efforts to keep calm.

Sandy hung his head, and fumbled nervously with his stick.

"Hech, hech," he said with a sigh, "It's a sair world. Ow, ow, but it surely is. Has the doctor seen her?" he asked, after a pause.

"Not yet, but we expect him every minute," answered Aileen. "Kathleen went for him this morning; but come inside, Mr. McTear," she said with something of the old cordial ring in her voice.

"I really don't think it would be right of me to disturb ye all," returned Sandy.

"You won't disturb us," said Aileen. "Come and rest yourself after your climb, and perhaps you'll take a glass of buttermilk. It's fresh, and I can recommend it."

She smiled in such a way that Sandy felt like crying.

"Yes, I'll take a drink from you," he said, following her into the house. "I'm rale fond of buttermilk, and, to say the truth, I'm a wee thocht dry."

Sandy heard vague noises from time to time as he was drinking his glass of buttermilk: low, moaning sounds, like what might be made by one who was in pain, and yet had hardly strength enough to give voice to it. He knew perfectly well whence they came, and who was suffering, though he never spoke a word, but sat as stolidly as if he were not in the least concerned.

Presently the doctor arrived, and was immediately shown into Mrs. Blake's room. Sandy rose, and, with Dennis, went outside to await the verdict; and the doctor seemed to be an eternity making his diagnosis. At last he appeared at the door with Aileen, and the two men hurried forward to hear what he had to say.

"The shock to the system has been very great," he said in reply to their questions, "or rather the successive shocks have been, and the action of the heart is somewhat seriously impaired. I will not say she cannot live, but you must not be surprised if she should go at any moment through syncope or failure of the heart's action. Little can be done for her at present, but keep her quiet. I will send up some medicine," he said to Aileen, "which you can give according to the directions on the label."

Then bidding them all a polite "good-morning," he was off.

"I'm going, too," said Sandy in something of a flutter. "I would only be in the way and working mischief if I stayed, so I'll just go wi' the doctor. Good-bye. I'll maybe look up afore long again to see how your patient's getting on. Good-bye." And he ran to overtake the doctor.

Sandy talked on the way down as though he felt no particular concern in the fate of the sick woman. He was



dying, indeed, to know whether the doctor really thought Mrs. Blake had any chance of life, and a dozen times was on the point of putting the question. But an absurd fear of appearing to take too warm an interest in the widow restrained him ; and so he chatted along in a half-callous, unemotional strain, as though she were no more than a casual acquaintance. Only when he was parting with the doctor, he said, " Doctor, after a' that's happened, thae puir fowk canna hae much siller—I mean thae Blake bodies ; and as I knew them when they were better off, if you send your bill in to me I'll see to it. Send it down by here to *The Shamrock* any time it suits you. I'm thinkin' that puir woman's no' going to trouble you long, so the bill canna be very big. Good-bye, Doctor ;" and Sandy walked away as though the paying of doctors' bills for indigent patients were a matter of every-day occurrence with him.

Meantime Dennis and Aileen were sadly endeavoring to adjust themselves to the stern certainty which the doctor's statement unmistakably implied. Neither of them, indeed, said openly there was no hope of Mrs. Blake's ultimate recovery ; but both knew perfectly that only that professional kindness and consideration which distinguish physicians in general kept the doctor from bluntly telling the truth. On his next visit, Aileen asked him directly how long he thought Mrs. Blake could live.

" She may live twenty-four hours," answered the doctor, " and she may not live one. It is now physically impossible for her ever to get well again."

Aileen received the scientific verdict with almost stoical composure. It was not for her to indulge in weak and unavailing grief. She had a duty to perform, and that vigorously and promptly. Ned must be found and told of his mother's condition. He had not remained among the rocks close by as he had been asked to remain, and it was hard to say where he was now, but he must be found, if

the whole mountainous waste above should have to be searched for him.

Aileen told her father of her purpose. The old man listened silently, as he did to all that was said to him now. He made no objection to her going, only he begged of her to take some companion along with her, if it should only be little Kathleen. But Aileen was determined to go alone, or at any rate to go in no human company. "I will take Teagh," she said in her usual quiet, firm way; "he will take care of me."

Accordingly, when the moon rose, she put on her heaviest shoes, her hat, a shawl, and her father's watch, and calling Teagh, started on her forlorn expedition.

She struck out with a light, vigorous step, swiftly crossing fields and climbing stiles, till she was among the craggy uplands. Then the acclivities became steep and difficult, disclosing great chasms and cavernous openings here and there, appalling in their pitchy blackness. But the ardor of her mind kept off fear, and with the dog close beside her, she climbed from rock to rock, peering keenly on either side as she went, and often stopping to explore some of the darker recesses, where Ned might be concealed.

Presently she was in a difficulty. Ned would not expect her to be out looking for him, and if he heard any noise, would naturally hide, imagining the officers of the law were on his track; so that she might pass within a few feet of where he lay without discovering him. She stood for a moment considering, then clambered to the top of a high rock and called his name, at first in a low, timid voice, then with her full force. The echoes took up her call, and "Ned, Ned," rang in wild uncanny mockery among the rocks and precipices. She stood holding her breath till the echoes died away, but there was no response.

She descended from the rock, and ran in a state of growing excitement to the summit of a little hill farther up. Here she called again, lustily and long—"Ned, Ned,

N-e-d ! " but as before, only the echoes heeded her. Ned was not about here.

She held on, half walking, half running, and from many minor eminences repeated her call of " Ned, Ned," only to be jeered at by the derisive echoes.

Presently she looked at her watch. It was eleven o'clock ; she had been out an hour and a half, and had walked she knew not how many miles. She stood and looked about her. She was on a sort of ridge, whence the view was comparatively extensive. On the one hand was a black ravine, with gloomy over-hanging precipices, and a stream brawling among the boulders at the bottom ; on the other hand, was a wide stretch of promiscuously scattered rocks, like the *debris* left by some pre-historic convulsion of nature, while in front was the stupendous barrier of mountains, showing here and there only a vaguely gleaming gap. Ned might be anywhere about, so she raised her voice again, and called till she was crimson in the face and out of breath. No response. A pang of despair shot through her heart. Had he left the district ? Should she not be able to find him ? Oh, yes, she must find him ; she must not fail in such an enterprise as this.

She ran along the top of the ridge, calling loudly at intervals, but getting no response, save that mocking one among the gorges and rocks.

By-and-bye the ridge terminated abruptly, running down in a steep declivity to what had the appearance of a flat, wide bog.

Should she cross and explore the wilds beyond ?

Before she could answer her own question, she had gathered up her skirts and was descending the hill at a run, and in a minute was in the quaking bog. She was obliged to look closely to her footsteps now, for the holes and black pools of water were frequent, and once, despite her caution and her clear eyes, she plumped dizzily into a pit, from which she dragged herself faint and gasping.

The water was oozing from her boots, and her skirts were draggled with mud ; but after a hasty wipe with a tuft of rank grass, she hurried on. Happily she gained the other side without further misadventure ; then after a brief pause to recover breath, she climbed to the crest of the nearest hill. Here the view of successive peaks and endless chasms and gorges struck her with a poignant despair. To search for Ned among those mountain fastnesses, would be as futile as the proverbial seeking of the needle in the hay stack. She sank on the ground from exhaustion and hopelessness, and looked at her watch. It was within a few minutes of twelve. Midnight, and in this fearful solitude.

For the first time the loneliness and weirdness of the scene began to oppress her ; her excited imagination began to picture the uncanny beings with which story and legend had peopled these remote wilds—goblins, pookas, evil spirits which all came forth at midnight ; and as she thought of all this, suddenly Teagh sprang to his feet growling with every bristle on his back erect. She glanced about in terror, but could see nothing, though Teagh continued to growl viciously, till presently, with a yelp of fear, he ran back and crouched beside her for protection. She did not dare to look round to see what was frightening him ; indeed she scarcely breathed, and her whole frame shook and quivered. Teagh's alarm lasted only a minute, but Aileen sat fixed to the spot, unable to move hand or foot. What was it ? A ghost, an evil spirit ? Perhaps the Principle of Evil himself. She felt like a block of stone at the thought.

All at once Teagh was up again, growling as before, and as before, too, he ran back to her after a moment, exhibiting the same craven fear. This time Aileen heard something—a swooping, rushing noise, as if something were flying swiftly through the air. She caught a glimpse of a black object between her and the sky, then the swooping,

rushing noise came again, and she sprang to her feet, screaming. For an instant there was the beating of strong wings in the air, and something portentously black and large rose swiftly skyward, and made off to the peaks above. What was it? An eagle which had seen her from afar sinking on the ground, and had rushed thither in hope of a banquet. When the thing was out of sight, Aileen tried to walk, but sank down from sheer weakness. She sat for several minutes with her shawl drawn tightly over her head and face, so that she might neither hear nor see; then she rose, and, hardly knowing what she was about, ran down the hill and back across the bog as fast as her legs could carry her. As soon as she touched firm ground again she fell down gasping, covered her face in her hands, and gave way to a fit of sobbing. In a little while, however, she managed to control herself, and got to her feet, feeling somewhat calmer. She looked at her watch. It was near one o'clock. What an eternity of agony she had endured since twelve!

With a sore sense of failure she began slowly to make her way downwards. It was useless, she thought, to search any longer; Ned had quite evidently left that part of the country; perhaps forever, and he would never hear of his mother's death, or of this lonely midnight search. In all her life before, Aileen had never felt so utterly crushed and despairing.

Presently she got to a height overlooking a wide patch of tumbled and broken rocks. Ned might possibly be lying in there; yet she did not care to call; and as she walked on, feeling her own weakness and the futility of her project, she suddenly came to the brink of a precipice. She was bound to stop, and the stoppage somehow led her to reconsider her decision not to call again. That certainly looked like a place where Ned might be.

As she stood considering, it occurred to her that in calling, her voice did not travel so well as it did many a time

when she carelessly sang some snatch of song to herself. Should she try to sing a verse? Yes, she would; and then, suddenly her clear soprano voice rose in a stave of "Kathleen Mavourneen." The effect was so inexpressibly weird that she stopped, shuddering; and was turning to go when she heard a noise as of some one stirring among the rocks in the shadows below. She looked down, her heart beating wildly, and her brain so dizzy that she was in imminent danger of falling over, and called "Ned," at the pitch of her voice.

"Ned, or whoever is there, come out," she added, in a spasm of terror.

A crouching figure appeared beside a huge stone, looked up cautiously, then with frantic haste clambered up into the light.

"My God, Aileen!" it cried; and the voice was Ned's.

Aileen sank down, almost fainting with excitement; and in another minute Ned was by her side.

"Aileen, Aileen," he cried, throwing his arms about the panting girl, "what are you doing here alone at this time of night?"

"Looking for you, Ned," gasped the girl, "Oh, Ned, I've had such a search."

"What is wrong? What has happened?" asked Ned, in alarm.

"Your mother, Ned, your mother; she's dying," answered Aileen.

She had not meant to be so abrupt, but she could not help it; she had not sufficient self-possession to be able to choose her words, or control her manner.

Ned gazed at her, not in consternation or sorrow, but as one to whom the news was grateful.

"She's dying, Ned," said the girl again, "and I could not bear the thought of her going without you seeing her. So I came out to look for you."

Ned bent down and kissed the white, upturned face.

"Aileen," he said, thickly, "the angels in heaven must be like you; they cannot be better."

"But your mother, Ned;" said Aileen, "you should be sorry for her, instead of saying things like that to me."

"Why should I be sorry?" said Ned, "when you have brought me the best news I could have."

The girl looked at him with an expression of pain and reproach.

"Don't be looking like that, Aileen," said Ned, tenderly, "do not be angry with me for saying it, but it is the best news you could bring me. If you told me that she was dead to-night, and that you and me would be dead to-morrow night, I'd sleep this one night happy yet. Aileen, do you love me?"

Aileen looked at him for a moment before answering, as though she half suspected his troubles were affecting his reason; but his look and manner were perfectly calm and rational.

"Why do you ask me such a question as that, Ned?" she asked; then, "doesn't my presence here tell you that?"

"If I was dead would you take up with another? that's what I mean."

"I can never love another but you, Ned, and you know it."

Ned seemed to consider before he spoke again.

"Look down there," he said at length; "if you and me was to go over there, we'd be together forever. Don't look frightened, Aileen. The world's gone clean agin me when I honestly tried to do well. When you told me my mother was dying I was glad, and I would be gladder still if you and me was away together."

"Ned, dear Ned," cried the girl in acute agony, "do not speak like that. Neither of us is going to die just yet. And to put all of these wrong ideas out of your head, come down with me and see your mother. The policemen are

away ; they didn't stay long, though they said they were going to watch, and you can see her without any trouble."

"Why should I go and see her, Aileen ?" To try and make her better ? No, no ; she cannot die too soon. Let her die, Aileen, let her die."

"I will not listen to you saying things you don't mean," returned Aileen, with something of her old firmness, "and especially at such a time as this. Come ; you must come and see her. You have so often told me you couldn't refuse what I asked, and I ask you, very earnestly, now to come and see your mother."

"Well, then, I will," said Ned, submissively. And they walked away arm-in-arm.

"Where were you when I came up ?" said Aileen, after a considerable period of silence. The way I called you could easily have heard me if you were here."

"Likely I was down below, getting a turnip," answered Ned. "That's all I've left to dine on now."

"My poor Ned," said Aileen, pityingly, "my poor Ned."

When they drew near to Ferndyke, they both deemed it more prudent that Ned should remain in the shadow of a hedge while Aileen went forward to reconnoitre.

"Mind you don't move till I come back," she said, "Even if there is somebody there I'll find means of coming to you soon." And she hurried forward.

On entering the house she was amazed to see her father and Kathleen sitting by the fire in very evident distress. They both looked up as she entered, and she could see that Kathleen had been crying.

"How is she ?" asked Aileen, at once suspecting what had happened.

"At pace—dead," answered Dennis, quietly.

"My God !" exclaimed Aileen, aghast, "and Ned here to see her."

Then after a minute she turned to go out again.



"I must run and tell him," she said. "I will be back in a minute, and Ned too."

But when Ned heard that his mother was dead he would not go into the house.

"No, Aileen," he said, "I will not go in; I can do no good, and might give some people pain. I will go back to my rocks."

"But I will see you again, won't I, Ned."

He smiled.

"Surely, Aileen," he answered, "surely."

He might as well humor her.

## CHAPTER XXV.

Two days later, Ned, lying on the top of a rock, contemplating the world below, saw a great gathering of people at Ferndyke, and the sight roused within him very singular feelings. Since the beginning of these troubles he had dreamed a good deal of what might happen. He had pictured himself in dire and manifold difficulties, but his imagination, in its most perturbed or morbid state had never conjured up a vision of his mother's funeral and he not daring to attend. That was a triumph of the enemy he had not anticipated, a refinement of persecution he could not have thought it possible for the utmost ingenuity of malignity to compass. He knew there were police there, ready to pounce on him should he appear. They were very zealous in trying to catch him—zealous at the instigation of Wheelan, who was now a magistrate, and ambitious to start his record brilliantly. Well, let Wheelan do his utmost; let him have his triumph; let him hunt the game if he liked the exercise. The day of reckoning was at hand. Nemesis was stirring.

The young man felt that nothing could stand between him and his vengeance. Wheelan might be victorious to-day, but another should be victorious to-morrow. And yet, strange to say, while Ned was all aflame with passion, he was pleased to see the vast concourse of people who had gathered to pay their final respects to his mother. Thank heaven, the common people still thought well of her, and of him also.

He leaned slightly forward as he sat, trying to distinguish what was going on. He saw the crowd press together, stand motionless for a while, then fall asunder, as if making way for somebody or something. The next instant he saw a black object being carried forward on men's shoulders, and as it went on the crowd closed slowly in behind, following it down the hill. He leaped from the rock and ran a piece under a hot impulse to go down at all hazards and see his mother buried. But he stopped suddenly and turned back to his rock. No, his mother's funeral should not be made the bait for catching him. After planning so much, enduring so much, he could not jeopardize the success of the object he had most at heart for the gratification of a mere sentiment. He had loved his mother and done his duty to her in life, and it would be no burden on his conscience if, under the circumstances, he seemed to neglect her in death.

He watched the procession moving slowly along the tortuous road below, till it passed into the woods and he could see it no more, and then the pathetic craving to go down and see his mother laid to rest came back upon him. But he fought it and conquered it. No, he would not go down now—but his time was coming to descend and settle scores—this very night, perhaps. Yes, he would act at once. There was no reason for delaying his vengeance. His mother was dead, he could not marry Aileen, he was weary of this wild beast life among the hills. Besides, if he delayed, hunger and privation might incapacitate him for the task before him. Instead, therefore, of there being any reason for delaying, there was every reason for acting promptly. He would go down this night—this very night, and by to-morrow there should be a tale to tell.

It hardly troubled him what was to become of himself after he had settled scores with Wheelan. The taking of revenge was the culmination of everything. Beyond that it could matter little what happened.

Never had day dragged so wearily ; but at last the sun was in the West, flooding all the sky with crimson. Ah, should he ever again see that evening miracle of transfiguration ! Should he ever again see the sun going down amid those flaming splendors that seemed like reflections from another world ? Very likely not, and yet the thought brought no sadness. Not once did he think he would like to see it again ; not once did his purpose falter ; not once did he whisper to himself it were better to defer the deed of darkness.

As soon as night had fallen he made his way down, going direct to the cemetery. It was distant about a mile from Dunbriggan, and in a lonely spot, so that he had little apprehension in going thither. When he reached the cemetery it was very dark, and he sat down by the gate to await the coming of the moon. It rose presently lighting up the grim memorials of the dead with a sort of ghastly lustre ; but Ned had no thought of ghosts, and felt no fear as he went in search of his mother's grave. He knew where it must be, and had little difficulty in discovering it. He stood for a little looking down upon the fresh mound, his hat in his hand, his face working, then dropped on his knees, and finally stretched himself on the top of the grave.

"My mother," he moaned, "my mother ;" and the strong man's tears watered the sod above the broken heart.

After a little he rose slowly to his feet, stood for a minute over the head of the grave, as though he would look into the face beneath, then turned and walked away, going in the direction of Dunbriggan.

He had not gone more than a quarter of a mile, however, when he saw a man in the road ahead, and paused to consider whether he should proceed. But feeling it would be cowardly to run from one man he had immediately re-

sumed his walk, and was presently surprised to meet Lucas, Mr. Wheelan's old clerk.

The two recognized and greeted each other in the same instant.

"What, Ned Blake!" said Lucas, "I didn't expect to meet you about the roads."

"Troth, I was tired living all by myself," returned Ned, "and thought I'd just come down to see what the world was doing; and I may say I never expected to see you here. When did you get out?"

Lucas had only been just released from prison, where he had passed his summer vacation for the assault on Mr. Wheelan.

"Oh, a little while ago," he answered vaguely.

"That was a nice shindy you had wid Misther Wheelan," said Ned, affecting to smile.

"It was," said Lucas. "And I hear now that he's going to drive me out of the country; but troth he may save himself the trouble, for I'm going straight to America."

"Oh, Misther Wheelan doesn't forget his friends," said Ned. "I'm beholden to him for some kindnesses myself. And ye'll have heard that he got Father O'Halloran laid away."

"Yes," said Lucas, "I heard Mr. Wheelan can work for his own ends right well, as I discovered long ago."

"He can," said Ned, "none better."

"And how's that little affair between you and Aileen McCarthy getting along?" asked Lucas after a pause. "I saw your old rival in The Shamrock this evening, drinking himself into a red hot fever. He's had the bounce, too."

"D'ye mean Tim O'Keefe?" asked Ned with a sudden interest he could not hide.

"I do. It seems that after he got the better of that knock you gave him he thought he should celebrate his recovery by getting drunk, and went and got so very drunk that he forgot to lick Wheelan's shoes, some say indeed he called

Wheelan some very plain names, but any way he was dismissed. He's indulging in some tall talk down yonder, and he's in such spirits that I dare say he'll treat you if you go down."

"I think I'll go and see," said Ned laughing. "Are there many peelers about?"

"Not very many, you can easily slip in."

And the two parted.

Strangely enough, Ned's first, and indeed his only thought on hearing of Tim O'Keefe's recovery, was one of savage anger.

"So they would go and hunt me like a wild beast when Tim was hardly hurt at all," he said to himself. "It's Wheelan that did it all; but, never mind, I'll be even wid him; and this very night too."

And then the difficulty of getting near Wheelan occurred to him. He remembered that the new magistrate went about under police protection, and he thought it likely that Kilgroom Castle would be guarded.

"But I'll go down and see anyway," he thought, "I can lie in the woods till I get him."

With that he climbed over a fence and struck out at a rapid pace across fields and through woods to Kilgroom.

"It'll be a service to the country," he said to himself as though to keep up his courage. "Such men as him are the plague and the pest of the country. It'll be a service; it will."

As he drew near his destination he felt hot and excited, yet he proceeded cautiously, for a certain craft, as of a hunted animal, characterized all his actions of late. He glided softly and stealthily along, more like a beast of prey on the prowl than a man, till he gained a thicket of laurel not a hundred and fifty yards from the castle door; and here he quietly hid in such a position as gave him a full view of the castle front. It was very still, not a leaf stirring nor any sound about save the eerie hoot-

ing of an occasional owl; he could hear his own heart thumping against his ribs. If he should be caught! if after all this trouble and risk his enemy should escape him; the thought was almost madness. And then suddenly his heart stopped, and he held his breath as the ponderous castle door opened, and a man stepped out upon the terrace. It was Wheelan—unguarded. He was hatless, and stood for a moment scanning the sky, as though to read the weather signs; then he withdrew. Ned almost cried out in the poignancy of his disappointment.

"Curse him," he muttered between his teeth, "have I missed him?"

But hardly had he said the words to himself, when Wheelan was out again with his hat on. Again he stood for a second looking at the heavens, then went round to the back, presently returning to the terrace, accompanied by a huge mastiff. He walked to and fro on the terrace for a few minutes, then descended to the avenue, coming straight to where Ned lay. The dog came running forward, sniffing suspiciously. Ned held his breath in terror. Had the brute scented him? No, he is away back, and Wheelan comes on leisurely, smoking his cigar, apparently without apprehension.

Ned looked out upon the man with burning eyes and a wildly throbbing heart. He seized his club to spring out as Wheelan came up, but something held him back. He would let Wheelan get farther down the avenue, farther from help; that was how he explained to himself the singular hesitancy. And Wheelan went on and turned and came back; and feeling he must act now or never, Ned once more grasped his weapon, and once more held back.

"What is the matter wid me," he thought, in a spasm of despair. "Am I to let him pass before my very eyes?"

And as he thus wrestled with himself, struggling to leap out, and yet unable to move, suddenly there was the report

of a pistol, and a wild cry of pain, and Wheelan fell heavily on his face on the road. The dog sprang at a man on the other side of the avenue ; there was another report, and the animal rolled over shot through the head.

Ned rushed out and struck wildly at Wheelan's assailant. The two clutched, struggled for an instant, and came to the ground, Ned uppermost ; and as he looked down he saw the face of Tim O'Keefe.

"Oh, you born devil, is this what you're about ?" he said fiercely.

"It is," said Tim, wrenching free the hand that held the pistol, "and damn you, take that."

Ned was conscious of a stinging pain, then everything about him reeled, and he fell back with a groan.

Tim instantly leaped to his feet.

"Couldn't have happened better," he said to himself, as he stuck his smoking pistol into Ned's hand.

Then he turned Wheelan over and took his pistol from his pocket.

"Take that," he said, putting another bullet into the prostrate man ; "and you take another, too," putting one in Ned.

"Now," he said, laying the weapon beside Wheelan, "scores are settled," and, before anyone could come, he bolted into the wood.



## CHAPTER XXVI.

MANY people were soon on the scene, and, after a considerable time had been uselessly spent in wailing and exclaiming and wringing of hands, the wounded men were carried into the castle and laid side by side on the dining-room floor. Then their wounds were attended to, as well as rustic intelligence could devise, while a mounted messenger was despatched to Dunbriggan for the doctor and Sub-Inspector Buckingham.

These gentlemen made all haste, but when they reached Kilgroom they found Mr. Wheelan dead, though Ned still breathed.

The doctor dressed his wounds as well as might be, while the Sub-Inspector made such inquiries and examinations as readily convinced him who had killed his friend.

"Doctor," he said, pointing to Ned, "that's the murderer: can he be removed?"

"No," answered the doctor, "not so much as to a bed. He must lie where he is."

"Well, then, a couple of men must remain with him," said the Sub-Inspector, "and I hope you will do your best to restore him that he may have justice. It's the most diabolical thing I ever saw or heard of."

In the meantime a crowd had come from Dunbriggan to share the sensation which the tragedy had caused. Among them, though actuated by different motives from theirs, was Sandy McTear. He managed to obtain a glimpse of Ned, gleaned from the incoherent account of the servants

the gist of all that happened, and started at once for Aileen.

"The lassie maun be telt," he said to himself, as he struck out through the woods above the castle. "She would like it hersel', and if there's a chance for Ned, it's in having her beside him. Hech, hech, dear me! I was feared it would end in something like this."

The Ferndyke household was in bed when he got up, but as neither Dennis nor Aileen was a sound sleeper now, his first gentle tap was heard.

"It's me," called Sandy, softly, through the keyhole. "Me, Sandy McTear."

The old man hastened to open the door.

"What is it, Misther McTear?" he asked in a voice of alarm.

"Is Aileen in," said Sandy, "it's her I want to see."

"Yes, Mr. McTear," answered Aileen herself, coming out with a big shawl about her, "what is wrong?"

"Oh, not much," answered Sandy, in assuring tones. "Ye maunna be feared. It's jist a wee accident. Ned has got hurt a bit down bye at the castle, and I thocht maybe ye'd like to go and see him. That's all. Dinna be feared."

"Yes, I'll go—I'll be ready in a minute," said Aileen, turning back to dress.

"I knowed how it would be," said Dennis, in his old querulous despairing way. "She'll be took from me, too."

"Hoot, toot," said Sandy, almost reproachfully. "Nobody's going to run away wi' her. I'll take care o' her mysel'."

Aileen was soon back, ready to go.

"Don't be thinking and troubling yourself now, father," she said. "Promise you'll go straight back to bed."

"Oh, yes, I'll go to bed," said Dennis. "Yes, yes, what good can an ould man like me do by not goin' to bed." And he turned back into the house,

"Is Ned much hurt? What kind of a hurt is it?" asked Aileen eagerly, as soon as she and Sandy were alone.

"Well, he's kind o' badly hurt," answered Sandy, hesitatingly, "but if I was to begin to tell you, ye'd think things were waur than they are. Words are such uncertain things. Ye'll just better bide till ye see him."

"He's not dead, is he?" said Aileen, her sudden apprehension in her voice.

"Hoot, toot. No, he's not dead," said Sandy. "D'ye think I widnae tell ye if he was?"

Aileen asked no more questions, and they pushed on in silence.

When they reached the castle, Ned was alone on the floor, Mr. Wheelan having been removed to another room.

When Aileen saw the stretched out figure on the floor, dabbled in blood, and with eyes closed as though there were no life in it, she uttered a little scream and fell on her knees.

"Ned, Ned," she cried, bending over him in her agony. "Speak to me, Ned. Won't you speak to me?"

Slowly the wounded man's eyes opened, looked at her vacantly, and closed again; but not a word he spoke.

"Tell me what all this means," cried Aileen, turning to those about her. "Oh, there's something terrible here."

"Mr. Wheelan's dead," said one of the policemen, "and he's blamed."

Aileen stared at him, and every vestige of color went from her face.

"Mr. Wheelan dead, and Ned blamed!" she repeated. "My God, it cannot be!"

"Oh Ned, Ned," she cried piteously then, and her head fell.

Many wiped their eyes furtively, even the constables turned away.

Presently Aileen rose, her eyes glistening, but her manner quiet and firm.

"Tell me all," she said. "Do not be afraid. Tell me everything as it happened." And she was told the story of the murder as those in the room knew it. When she had heard it, she kneeled quietly beside Ned and took his hand.

"What does the doctor say?" she asked.

"He has given no opinion, Miss," answered some one.

"There was no need, I suppose," said Aileen, quietly.

"No, there was no need. May I stay beside him?" she said, addressing one of the policemen.

"So far as I am concerned," he answered.

"Thank you," she said.

Throughout the night Ned gave an occasional low moan, but except for that he might have been dead.

The surgeon returned on the morning, dressed his wounds, and looked grave; but Aileen asked no questions. She knew only too well what the man of science thought.

During the forenoon she happened to be left alone for a minute with Ned, and, unable to restrain herself, she bent down and covered the pallid face with kisses.

A faint smile played over the features, the eyes opened slightly and the lips moved.

"Aileen."

The word was spoken so faintly as hardly to be audible, but Aileen heard it well.

"What is it, Ned?" she asked, keeping her face close to his. And once more came the weakly whispered word, "Aileen."

"Yes, Ned," said Aileen, fancying he wanted to say something. "What is it?"

"I'm glad—I—didn't—do—it."

"And who did it, Ned?" asked Aileen, eagerly. "Tell me who did it, for they blame you."

But there came no answer, though the feeble lips could be seen trying to frame one.

That self-exonerating sentence was his last. Half an

hour later the eyelids twitched a little, the bleeding chest heaved gently, and Ned passed beyond the jurisdiction of earthly courts.

As Aileen rose to her feet, white, but composed, she heard a commotion about the door, and going out, found Mary Maguire talking and gesticulating vehemently to the two constables.

"I seen him wid my own two eyes," she was saying. "Faix did I. I have been watchin' in them woods for a howl month, faix have I, because I knowed it was comin'. I knowed I'd see the end av him. An' it was Tim O'Keefe did it, an' sorra a hand Ned Blake had in't but trying to save Wheelan."

"Here's a woman who claims to have witnessed the murder, and says it was Tim O'Keefe, the old bailiff, who did it," said one of the policemen to Aileen.

"Thank God!" said Aileen, with a sigh of relief. "Ned told me himself he didn't do it," and she passed out.

When she reached Ferndyke the gloaming was falling, and it seemed to her that never again would day return.

Her father met her at the door and inquired about Ned, for he had been told of what had happened.

"I have given him up, father," she said quietly. "He'll trouble you no more."

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After the funeral, Sandy McTear made preparations for immediately leaving the country. He had an affecting interview with Father O'Halloran in jail; and by the light of the moon he paid a surreptitious visit to the cemetery, and looked on two fresh graves, side by side, and another but a short distance off. Sandy had his own reflections.

"They're a' equal there," he said, as he stood with uncovered head. "The old, old story, o' the oppressor and oppressed lying down together, and the sair heart ceasing frae it's troubling. Weel, weel, I had thochts ance things

might turn out differently. But we're a' puir, weak, helpless creturs. God help us !"

Last of all, he paid a visit to Ferndyke.

"And you are going to leave us, Mr. McTear," said Aileen. Her voice was very low now.

"I didna think there was any further use for me here," replied Sandy, "and so I have accepted Mr. Johnson's offer."

She took his hand in hers.

"Wherever you go," she said in faltering tones, "may God bless you for all you have done for me and mine !"

"Hoot, toot," said Sandy, "I did nothing but what any Christian body would hae done." And he hurried away, furtively wiping his eyes. Next day he sailed.

In the meantime, Col. Croker had returned to Kilgroom, and the law had laid its hand on the person of Mr. Timothy O'Keefe.

THE END.

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